SONGS IN ZIKLAG

ALLEN UPWARD.

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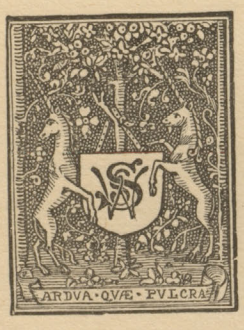
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SONGS IN ZIKLAG

BY

ALLEN UPWARD.

"What is love but religion distorted in the search for a visible God?"
—*Edwin Hamilton.*



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PREFACE.

In our days, when to be a poetaster is almost a crime, and when the neglected shelves of crowded libraries frown a mute reproach on the daring adventurer in the realms of print, it becomes the beginner who would not be deemed immodest to offer some apology for entering the packed arena. However, though there is already in the world enough poetry to afford reading for a lifetime, there is no sign of the manufacture ceasing for want of encouragement. It was once thought that the human heart was unchanged in all ages, and an English essayist has ventured to deny the existence of progress in the region of moral sentiment. But the doctrine of evolution has broken through those ideas, and it must be admitted that, just as language imperceptibly changes in the course of centuries, so do the expressions and modes of thought, if not the thoughts themselves, of men alter to an extent that renders necessary a continual supplanting of the singers and seers of olden time by others in direct sympathy with the emotions of the current hour. Even those great books which, written by men in advance of their time, stand out from the forgotten ruck of their contemporary literature, are not sufficient without being expounded and supplemented to meet the requirements of an advancing race. Meanwhile the lesser growth, like grass round the roots of a tree, is periodically cut down and renewed, and our Draytons and Marlowes make way for our Cowleys and Popes, who are in turn succeeded by the Cowpers and Thomsons, whose meaning has not yet become obscured.

These considerations serve to justify the modern writer in putting forth his humble contributions to the treasury of literature. Whether

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the contents of this little volume contain an inspiration from modern feelings and ideas, rather than mere reminiscences, the " poems distilled from poems," of which the American speaks, the reader must find out; and the writer is ready to abide the verdict given on those grounds. Let it not be supposed, however, that this book claims what is called originality. To take up the thread, where his worthier predecessors had relinquished it, to bring the old story of the world down to date, rather than to commence a new but unreal and fantastic departure, was the task which the writer set himself. There are, moreover, some things which have been told to the world very often, but as they are not yet believed, he has ventured to tell them again.

He is, perhaps, unduly indifferent in regard to his technical workmanship. Of course he would not have written in verse had he not believed his work to be capable of passing muster with the average reader. But he is not one of those who regard poetry as a fine art. Rhymed or unrhymed verse appears to him to be the natural and spontaneous medium for the expression of certain classes of ideas and emotions. The thoughts in this book are put in verse because the writer could not express them better in prose, and, that being so, he found and sought to impart pleasure by connecting them with musical sounds.

That the following pieces are capable of affording gratification to some, however few, the author is assured by experience. This must form his final excuse for committing them to the public press. It should be unnecessary to mention that the first person has in many cases been employed merely for the sake of that brevity and force which accompany the dramatic form.

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SONGS OF LOVE.

SONNETS TO ELLA.

FIRST SERIES.

I.

DEDICATION.

To thee whom I have vainly loved so long,
  Of natural course I dedicate these verses ;
  Graves are they of my withered love,—or hearses,
Embalm'd wherein lies what was once so strong.
O take them, then, for they to thee belong !
  Receive them, thou, secure from such like curses,
  Guarding thy memory 'gainst time's reverses,
Yielding a tribute of unfading song !
Let me confess thy earthly part will ne'er
  O'erlook these testaments of love departed,
Nor (if it should) believe thyself the heir :
Doubtless thou hast thy own sufficient share
  Of grief,—I would not wish thee heavy-hearted,
Nor does my love for mere compassion care.

II.

I love thee, dear one, more than this can tell,
Or thou canst comprehend, who lov'st not me.
Thou canst not fathom half my misery,
Nor reach the bottom of my love's deep well.
Nor dost thou care to try it, for the knell
Of separation hath divided thee
From him who ne'er again that face may see,
Whose image in his heart must ever dwell.
Yet it is better so, for, wert thou mine,
No passionate embraces could suffice
To slake the ardour of my quenchless love,
Unless my essence were transfused with thine,
And both one being made, as Paradise
Beholds its happy angels do, above.

III.

If any creature ask'd me to explain
  Love's nature, and the feelings it doth bring,
  I would not say it maketh men to sing,
Or deepens pleasure, or disperses pain ;
I would not say, it glows amid the rain,
  Or adds to mortal flesh ethereal wing,
  Or makes the humblest peasant like a king,
For other things may lead by such a lane ;
But when I trace the letters of thy name,
  And find that, when reversed, they only need
An N, to make them with my own the same,
And feel a throb of pleasure at the thought,—
  That, I would answer, that is Love indeed,
When trifling things become with meaning fraught.

IV.

How proudly beats my heart to know thy face
  Receives its beauty's proper meed of praise
  Where'er it goes, that others love to gaze
Upon the charms that I so highly place!
Yet how it sickens when those others chase
  The selfsame quarry I, by arduous ways,
  Have follow'd through so many weary days,
Without the victory to do me grace!
I would secure thee to myself alone,
  And yet would have thee by the world admired,
Nor can my voice forbear to speak thy charms;
I would not have thy real person known,
  Lest others might, by my description fired,
With more success invite thee to their arms.

V.

Oh, for a moment I believed thee mine!
And in that moment all the world became
Delightful, joyful, and the solar flame
With added radiance on it seemed to shine,
And all the birds burst forth before the shrine
Of nature, and the flowers, untouch'd by shame,
Offer'd their bloom to every wind that came,
The lambs rejoiced beside th' untroubled kine,
A deeper green o'erspread the waving trees,
A happier murmur left the waterfall,
And children's voices shook the clearer air,
And pleasure stept along the plain at ease,
And love ascended to the rule of all,
And all was beautiful as thou wast fair!

VI.

But no man's joy is perfectly supreme
For more than just one moment in his years ;
And thy behaviour stung my heart with fears
That all my happiness was but a dream.
O bitter, bitter is the mournful theme !
Hard is his fate who has to stop men's ears,
To quench beneath his eyes the burning tears,
Unconscious of his woe, who has to seem
To others ; but the hardest fate of all
Is when we dare not to ourselves reveal
The weight of sorrow that begins to press.
And when with hopeless arts I strove to call
Thee back to me, I struggled to conceal
From my own knowledge my own wretchedness.

VII.

I wrote thy name upon the faithless sand,
  The sea came up, the unrelenting sea,
  And swept across the marks that stood for thee,
And soon effaced the labour of my hand.
Whereat I said,—My bosom is the strand,
  Those billows are the fates that follow me,
  From whose attendance I am never free ;
And even as those waves upon the land
O'ercome the token that I thought to leave,
  So do the tireless waters of my fate
O'erwhelm, beneath their rush, my heart's desire,
And I am left, for fruitless love to grieve,
  For thirst that none but thou canst satiate,
Consuming vainly with unquenched fire.

VIII.

How sweet it is to sleep when happy dreams
  Enshadow my worn brain and weary heart,
  And all at once thy image seems to start
Before me, and my waking sorrow seems
To have departed! In such passing gleams
  I see thee lovely, loving, loved. Thou art
  No longer anxious from my side to part,
And all my being with thy worship teems.
But when the hateful morning comes to break
  The sweet enchantment that controls my sense,
And re-acquaint me with my misery,
I struggle long unwilling to awake;
  And when I do, I curse the sun's offence,
I curse the day, my fate, and all but thee.

IX.

Once, after I had left thee, I return'd
To seek the love that had been mine before,
And hoped that our affections as of yore
Might be renew'd. With ardour then I burn'd,
But when I saw thee, I this lesson learn'd,
That weak affection, when it shuts the door,
Will shut it wholly and for evermore,
And deeper love will be more deeply spurn'd.
But that is long ago, and long ago
I left thee with a heart so full of grief
That ever since in sighs I draw my breath ;
Nor have I ever, since I came to know
My hopelessness, experienced such relief
That I would not have gladly welcomed death.

X.

They err who say the sonnet is a toy
  For lazy bards to sport with in their leisure ;
  Who weave one as an intellectual pleasure,
A careless, metric pastime to enjoy.
And they degrade it too whose themes destroy
  The sacred purpose of this hallow'd measure ;
  Who use this precious casket for a treasure
Whose nature has some different alloy.
  The passions are the only proper themes
  For this most tender consecrated song,
The greatest singers have not done without :
  It is the treasure-house of poets' dreams,
  And they who seek the door and listen long,
May hear the heart-throbs beat their passion out.

XI.

At certain periods I am reconciled
  To loss of thee, and though a heavy stone
  Lies ever on my heart, I cease to groan,
And my deep sorrow is no longer wild.
But then the features of a passing child
  Remind me on a sudden of thine own;
  A picture, or a sentence, or a tone
Recalls thee, and the grief that had grown mild
Resumes with double force its fiery sway,
  And what was erst a stone becomes a knife
To tear and pierce where it had crush'd before,
Like the rough winds that rush across a bay,
  And, rousing all the waves to join the strife,
Burst with loud tumult on the quiet shore.

XII.

Again the weary heart doth prompt the hand,
  Again the weary hand takes up the pen,
  To cast its burden on the Muse, and then
Thy figure doth again before me stand,
And I must add another to the band
  Of songs that I have panted outwards when
  I scarce endured to meet my fellow-men,
Or hear a voice within the real land.
So swallow'd up am I in thy sweet dreams,
  And never do I wish another fate.
'Tis better to be mournful over thee
Than to be cheerful over other themes.
  Thus drag I on my life disconsolate,
Nor hope a medicine for my misery.

XIII.

Three years ago, I met a cunning fiend,
  Who slipp'd into my presence unawares,
  Ere yet I knew of such pernicious snares ;
And while his real aspect yet was screen'd,
On him with trust and confidence I lean'd.
  But latter time his mask of friendship tears,
  And now a horrible aspect he wears ;
Nor all his terrors have I fully glean'd.
But now we fight incessantly and long ;
  Anon I drive him for a space away,
Anon he turns and rends me in the mud.
Fiercely he bites me, for his teeth are strong.
  Still does the combat rage from day to day,
And every Sonnet is a drop of blood.

XIV.

Oh, ne'er can love take comfort from renown,
Nor can a fellow-feeling ease the heart.
That Petrarch suffer'd from his loved one's frown,
And sweet-tongued Shakespeare felt the selfsame smart,
Can give no aid to bring my anguish down.
In vain would sorrow seek the aid of art,
For brooding only will prolong the pain,
And sweetest songs will but increase its fire.
I, too, have sung my lullabies in vain,
And thrown my sonnets on the maddening pyre
Of passion. Grief was ne'er by music slain ;
No exercise its patient mood will tire.
Sorrow is like a poison in the blood,
And mournful verses are but poison'd food,

XV.

Again, once more, once more and yet again,
A sigh, a groan, a breathing and a groan,
An aimless grief making an aimless moan,
A dull, hard, heavy, suffocating pain.
Clogg'd, fetter'd, prison'd, bound in padlock'd chain,
Bolted and barr'd and buried up in stone,
Deserted, solitary, still, alone,—
Thus have I linger'd, languish'd long, and lain.
No light, no heat, no hope, no room for hope,
No air, no motion, no support, no food,
Cramp'd, chill'd, cold, callous, cover'd up from sight;
My life a weary, useless, endless rope
Dragg'd on by destiny, o'er harsh and crude,
Through one long stretch of dark, dank, silent night.

SECOND SERIES.

XVI.

Why art thou silent for so long, my lyre,
Nor soundest still the well-belovéd name
I taught thee two years since? Love's constant fire
Burns unextinguish'd in my heart the same;
Years have not smother'd its resplendent spire,
It, neither joys eclipse nor woes can tame.
Why then forbear to sing that love aloud,
Which I must ever feel? Perennial song
Shall bloom around my passion, and enshroud
Love in an arbour, beautiful and strong,
Which never shall be enter'd by the crowd,
Though to its door true lovers ever throng.
Wake, lyre! sing, throat! vibrate, surrounding air!
For all is love, and love is everywhere.

XVII.

Love is a haunting spirit, not a thing
That can be taken up awhile and dropp'd.
To whom it once hath come it aye will cling;
It grows like grass, nor can like grass be cropp'd;
Until it fully hath outspent its swing,
It can by no mere mortal means be stopp'd.
A jailer cruel, by its mastering hands
Who once is pent, can never be unpent
Till time's revolving glass hath spilt the sands
Which fate had measured out with prime intent.
Helpless are they who linger in such bands,
To them no refuge nor escape is lent,
Save killing that whereon love's power is hung,
And all that youth adores and bards have sung.

XVIII.

Unworthy they to love, whose love is less
  Than life itself in dearness or in strength.
True lovers welcome loves relentlessness,
  And never wish to bound his empire's length.
Nor would they take from other hands redress,
Than those which plunged them first in their distress.
I do recant all that I wrote before
  About the tortures that torment my soul,
And would be willing were they twice as sore,
  So that my love I still retained whole.
So that my heart preserve its precious ore,
  Let love's fierce furnace heap on coal to coal;
And all my sufferings are brightly blent
With glimpses that from heaven itself are lent.

XIX.

O could we meet again ! 'Tis five years past
Since on thy wondrous features first I glanced,
And four full years since I beheld them last :
Features with which my soul was so entranced,
That in its hidden depths they yet are glassed,
By all love's longing worship more enhanced,
And firm against all fading, fixéd fast.
I dare not wish to meet thee, for thou canst
By no enchantment have preserved the bloom
That spread its youthful splendour round the face
Which I still cherish in my secret place ;
For flesh-corrupting time doth all consume,
And he hath power thy glories to erase,
But love keeps all, and laughs at change's doom.

XX.

I have a precious stone which none will buy,
And which I may not set in any ring.
I have a tree whose branches flourish high,
But on its boughs no pleasant bird will sing.
I have a stream which never runneth dry,
But through its waters swims no living thing.
I have a passion whose deep-springing source
Urges its torrent-way from out my soul,
But iron gates athwart its rushing course
Compel it backward on its path to roll,
Drowning beneath its angry, sullen force
My hopes, my thoughts, in one unvalued shoal.
Wherefore, O well-beloved, is this so?
And why should love enslave me to a foe?

XXI.

Let other poets boast their deathless rhymes ;
I care no whit if this verse live or not :
What matter if the world's praise round it climbs ?
'Twas writ for thee, and thee it hath not got.
And when we are no more, in other times,
It may, for aught I trouble, unknown rot.
If I could have the peerless privilege
To win thee by such works I would in gold,
Inscribe them glorious on some pillar'd ledge,
That my proud triumph might be proudly told.
But while they fail like an undriven wedge,
In little value will I them enfold.
Monuments are they of my grief and shame,
So let them die with him from whom they came.

XXII.

I wish thou would'st some quarrel with me find,
And then a pleading in defence permit,
For I would ransack all that e'er was writ
But I would bring persuasion to thy mind.
Ah, with what art my plea should be design'd!
There should be reasons hard as steel in it;
No question but I would with answer fit,
Till I should force thy judgment to be kind.
Alas! not all Love's barrister advanced,
Although his eloquence had eagle's wings,
Could carry choice from where itself had chanced.
It is a waste of time to say such things;
More fix'd than rocks are Love's imaginings,
Thou dost not love me, and thou never canst.

XXIII.

Now will I give a token to my foes :—
  Let those who care to rob me of my strength
Seek out this water-lily where it grows,
  And bind me round with its entwining length.
I swear I will not seek such bonds to break,
  Nor will I struggle when they are put on ;
A paradise of prison I will make,
  Nor ever wish such happy fetters gone.
For love is older than first principles,
  And stronger than ideas of wrong or right,
And so much of the savage in me dwells
  As in such ways t' assert his primal might.
And in this chaos where our life is cast,
Love is one anchor that will aye hold fast.

XXIV.

Impossible, impossible, alas!
And vainly do I write such things as these,
For uncompassioning time doth onward pass,
Effacing all things in his slow degrees:
And that is gone which never did exist,
And that is faded which was never bright;
I sing, and there is no man left to list:
Thy memory is swallow'd up in night:
Thy place knows thee no more, nor ever will;
Thou wast most like a vision of mine own,
And were I to regain thy presence still,
Thy lineaments to me would scarce be known.
The world is rushing on, and in its wind
Men's hearts, like falling leaves, are whirl'd and left behind.

XXV.

Come, let me make a moral to my song,
And then desist. Yet I was never aught
But as a lyre which the breeze pass'd along,
Depositing the music that it brought.
And what I write of love is not mine own,
Nor do I claim the authorship of these ;
But like a mariner who sails alone
Among spice islands in Pacific seas,
And feels strange tremors and disquietude,
Affrighted by the very loveliness
Of all around, so am I in this mood ;
And what its meaning is I cannot guess,
For oft I hate myself for loving so,
And oft I wonder whether I love or no.

XXVI.

It is a dangerous, wretched thing to nourish
  Extreme ambition for ungranted gifts :
Green herbs will not in sandy deserts flourish,
  Nor summer flowers in snowy mountains' rifts,
For me thou never wast nor couldst be meant ;
  Love is the blessing of a happy few,
But unto me has been a chastisement.
  So am I as a man who had in view
For one long hour a gate of Paradise,
  And ever after walk'd with backward looks,
Repining for the rapture nearly given,
Ready to buy it back at any price,
  Yet knowing that the hill-descending brooks
As well might try to re-ascend to heaven.

XXVII.

Within the books of bygone lamentations
  Find I an echo of my own despair,
  I hear a fadeless music lingering there,
Thick with the sobs of all the generations.
For ever come again the same relations
  To those who breathe this light-obscuring air;
  The power that hateth joy is everywhere,
And heavy lies his hand upon the nations.
  And ancient heroes were oppresséd thus,
And lovely queens with equal darts were smitten,
Departed poets by such fangs were bitten,
  The load bruised them that lieth upon us.
  Alas! woe's cause is still mysterious,
But in our race's tears its long effects are written.

XXVIII.

The gods, who are immortal and endure
  In everlasting certainty of breath,
  Envy their slaves the privilege of death ;
For bliss, by its own nature, is impure,
And hath relapses in rotation sure ;
  Yet while the unending ages roll away,
  They on their pinnacles for ever stay,
Like prisoners whom crystals cells immure.
Wherefore they grudge the mortals' consolation
  And fence it off with terrors of the brain,
  And prohibitions, and material pain,
Lest men should seek, from sorrow's iteration,
Too soon a refuge, and their wide creation
  Drift back to silent emptiness again.

XXIX.

Thou art not only Ella, but thou art
  The representative of other things;
One name includes a widely throbbing smart;
  One passion is the point of many stings.
The sigh of him who from his home must part
  Pours through this pipe its wounded languishings,
The doubts of climbers whose ideal is high,
  The wish of a just soul to be at peace
Within a world it yet must needs defy,
  The grief of those whose labours never cease,
The prayer for rain from one whose lips are dry,
  The shudder of a criminal condemn'd,
  The cry of men by imminent breakers hemm'd,
The pleading of a martyr to the sky.

XXX.

Thou torment of rejected love that long
  Harass'd me on my march toward other ends,
  Even thy grinding force at last befriends ;
For I have shed in diamond dust of song,
Many a harsh flaw and many a facet wrong ;
  And like rough pebbles which the sea amends,
  The soul of man, from strife like this ascends
Perfected, burnish'd, renovate and strong.
And since the greatest foe of man is pride,
  And pride's defeat, with love's despair, began,
I thank thee for the service thou hast done.
Be ever as a signal by my side ;
  Cleave to me, teach me that I too am man,
And rooted to a planet of the sun !

THE QUESTION.

It was in the fairy days of early summer,
When they thought that none was near,
That two figures stood upon an old Welsh headland ;
And I thought that I could hear
In the tender, longing gesture of the speaker,
And the listener's thoughtful air,
Such a song as I have written,—or I caught it
From a seagull in the air.

WE stand upon a lonely promontory
That is mated to the sea,
And the noise and fierce disturbance of existence
Have departed utterly ;
Far away in the long distance lieth London,
And the scenes to men resigned ;
The fierce engine, breathing smoke and trampling iron,
Is a score of miles behind ;
The deserted little lonely fossil city,—
We have gone beyond its reach,
All alone with the soft clouds upon the heaven
And the waves upon the beach.

And the stretch of that dark, distant-heaving ocean,
With its sprinkled sunny isles,
Brings before my mind the long stretch of existence
And its briefly scatter'd smiles.
For as those fair islets gather round the coast-line,
While there is not one beyond,
So life plants its fairest flowers around its gateway,
Only its first hours are fond.
And as we behold the rippling billows round us,
When they reach the rocks, uprear
And dash themselves, and break, and fall back helpless,
With a moaning sad to hear;
So do the lives that flow along most smoothly
Come to their reef-woe at last,
And shatter'd on the silent rocks of sorrow,
Find their term of joy is pass'd.
And though you have hardly look'd across the threshold,
I have pass'd it over long,
And the distance that I sing from has imparted
A sad cadence to my song.
But to-day I would entreat of you to listen,
Though you never should again,
While I pour into your ears, this once, my story,
And although I give you pain.
For assuredly in your hereafter lifetime
Although many friends you meet,
You will never find a one with truer pulses
Than in my bosom beat;
And such love is like a rare and noble perfume,
Which, though you drink it not,

Will preserve through many an after-year its fragrance,
When the wine of lust's forgot.
And because we are so far apart, I know not
If you know what thing love is,
What idea you have form'd of inner friendship,
And of such an hour as this.
Wherefore I would ask your patience for a moment
While I speak upon this theme,
While I strive to open up earth's subtle secret,
To interpret life's dim dream.

You have read of all the courses of the planets,
And the cycles of the spheres,
And the meaning of the universal motion
Has been spoken in your ears,
You have learnt of that unseen but awful power
Which no atom can withstand,
That impenetrates all space and all existence,
Like the fingers of God's hand,
Ever working to draw all things in together,
To unite the stars and suns,
In obedience to which the world moves onward,
And the little brooklet runs.
But you know not, for you have not yet been taught it,
And it is not taught in schools,
That a similar great all-compelling pressure
Through the spirit-kingdom rules;
That the heaven which all men talk about with longing
Is another name for peace,
Such peace as shall prevail when all the jarring
Of conflicting thought shall cease;

That the God, whom all men worship, is the centre
Where that peace alone is found,
Wherein all the rush of mortal aspirations
Shall be swallow'd up and drown'd ;
That this vast together-drawing force is tugging
At the heart of every one,
Binding lover unto lover, wife to husband,
And the mother to the son ;
That in just so far as we obey its motive
And forbear to stand alone,
Will the trouble of existence vanish from us,
And its happiness be known ;
That the proud and the ambitious and the selfish,
Who resist this godlike force,
Are like rocks that stand out, worn upon and wearing,
In a rushing torrent's course ;
And that self-love is the sole great source of evil,
Every other sin above;
And that loving one another here is heaven ;
And that God himself is Love.
Then if you will but consider for a moment
Of the way that man is form'd,
You will see that kindred forces move the body
As by which this soul is warm'd.
So that while we wander here remote and darkling
In the nether fields of space,
Some slight solace may be given to the spirit
By the body's rough embrace.
For be sure that when the lips of lovers fasten,
The compulsion that they feel

Is the same that gives the rain-cloud to the ocean,
Or the magnet to the steel.
And believe not those who tell you that such impulse
Is a thing to need control,
Or that anything is good which interfereth
With the yearnings of the soul.
For the truly wise have long ago discover'd
That the human spirit grows
In the body, as the grape-vine in the vineyard,
And from out the soil the rose.
And as from the rankest soil that bloom is fairest,
And the richest tendrils curl,
And as only when disease infects him is it
That the oyster yields his pearl;
In like manner from the least exalted body
May the noblest spirit shoot,
And the man who greatly heeds his lower nature
Is a comrade to the brute.

Then believe me when I tell you of the value
And the excellence of love,
That the homage of a true heart is worth prizing
Every other thing above;
And that in yourself the flower of affection,
If you will but let it bloom,
Will o'erflow you with a silent, subtle comfort,
And will many an ill consume.
And in every other purpose you may follow,
With whatever hopes you start,
There will surely happen moments of revulsion
And of anguish at the heart,

While the pulse of true affection keeps its gladness
Throughout all life's shocks and scars,
Like the lustre of the moon that looms resplendent
O'er a thousand twinkling stars.

Up to this I have been bold in what I utter'd,
For I spoke of what I knew,
Of affection and of love and lasting friendship,
To the whole world that is true.
But if now I seem to falter or to stammer,
Or to plead with wilder tongue,
'Tis because I feel the fate of all my lifetime
Is upon this utterance hung.
And till now I spoke the maxims of a teacher,
And I exhortations gave ;
But from hence I am entreating as a suppliant
With a mighty boon to crave.
And yet even in the midst of my intenseness,
And before I dare begin,
I am trembling lest my words, and not my meaning,
An unfair consent should win.
For I fear that I am eloquent and subtle,
And may thus your ear persuade,
And a promise that will afterwards be broken
Were better never made.
So beware of how you listen to my pleading,
And refuse it if you like,
For I cannot cease to love you, nor resent it
Though to my heart's core you strike.
And because I feel you are but little conscious
Of the fervour of love's reign,

And you could not, even if you would, upon me
Recompense my love again,
Now the pledge that I would offer for your taking,
Unto which you can be true,
Is to give me not so much as your affection,
But to let me live by you.
For I care not if the thunder out of heaven
Should forbid us twain to meet,
If the soft light of your eyes vouchsafe the answer
That will make my whole life sweet.
And though all the kings and conquerors on this planet,
Undertook to make you mine,
I would give a year of bought and forced caresses
For a single loving sign.
I would rather that an arm'd troop thrust me from you,
Than that you should turn away ;
I would rather hear a judge pronounce my sentence
Than your lips uttering, Nay ;
I would rather see an iron gate betwixt us,
Than a frown upon your brow ;
I would rather that the sea came up and choked us,
Than that you refused my vow.

For my life is all disorder'd since I met you,
And I know not any peace ;
I am harried and tormented by your image,
And my struggles never cease.
In the presence of the great throng, shouting plaudits,
I am longing to be here.

Than the praises of the learned your least whisper
Is more welcome in mine ear.
When the glow of utmost wisdom is upon me,
And my soul is raised to God,
The word *love* suffices to recall you to me,
And I sink upon the sod.
In the haunts of those who like me or esteem me,
I am looking for your face;
I am wishing to be even struck by your hand
In another's fond embrace.
Thus as happy love exalts and trains the spirit
To the regions of the sky,
So the pangs I bear for your sake are like demons
That would every good deny.
It were better I should be depriv'd completely
Than in this mad vortex stay,
It were better you should turn outright and hate me
Than with such a passion play.
It were better my heart's field were wholly sterile
Than uptorn by such a plough,
It were better you were dead and turn'd to ashes
Than alive and cold as now.
There are moments when I feel that even your pity,
Your occasional caress,
Your forgiveness, were enough for me to live on,
Were sufficient happiness.
Never dared I think of envying the lovers
Whose beloved ones loved them,
For I felt that such were scarcely earthly beings
That they dwelt within Heaven's hem:

But I always pined with envy when I read of
Love repaid by gratitude,
And I felt that I had power to gain a kingdom,
If you could by that be woo'd.
And the most entrancing bliss I ever met with
Was a smile upon your face,
And the most delightful dream I ever woke from
Was of no return'd embrace,—
But I dream'd that I had come into a chamber
In the twilight of the day,
And I sat and talk'd of comfort at the bedside
Whereupon your brother lay,
When I suddenly could feel my neck to tingle
As there crept around an arm,
And I turn'd and saw you sitting there beside me,
And my life bow'd to the charm ;
And not ever did I wish in any sorrow,
Any sharpest point of pain,
As I wish'd that kindly Death would seize that moment,
That I might not wake again.

There has been a time,—but I was very young then,
And my soul was innocent,
And I thought that the emotions of our nature
Were for our enjoyment meant,—
That I loved as I again shall love not ever,
As I love not even you,
With a love that like a wild-flower in the night-time
Up within my being grew ;
With a love that was a part of all my spring-time,
An effulgence of the soul,

An outgoing and an instinct and a worship,
With a shadow for its goal.
And for that love I demanded a completion,
And I needed it return'd ;
And you know, for I have told you, how it happen'd,
And how soon my fate I learn'd.
And you know that I have never since that moment
Look'd upon that face again ;
And shall never, and no longer care to do so,
For that love was of the brain,
'Twas a heavenly and not an earthly passion,
It exists without resource ;
It has flourish'd even higher for its failure ;
It has steer'd my spirit's course.
It has merged into a spiritual training,
And it now has naught to do
With the craving and the want of human nature
That impels me still to you.
Hear me ! I am sick for one to thrust my love on,
And I care not in this mood
What at all may be your answer, in the meantime
If you let yourself be woo'd.
To behold you even not sullen is greater rapture
Than to call the Koh-i-noor my own ;
And to talk to you of love, thus, is more pleasant
Than would be ordering a kingdom from a throne ;
And to have you near me and not repulsing me seems the highest
Of all the joys that the broad earth can display,
And I would joyfully exchange a lonely lifetime
For your friendship for one day.

You must surely feel some movement of compassion
For the grief that I am in ;
You must surely feel some pride and satisfaction
So intense a love to win.
Is it very hard to lie and let me love you ?
Is it very hard to spend
A few minutes in receiving the devotion
Of a true and faithful friend ?—
Whose sole object in his life and work from henceforth
Would be but to honour you,
And redeem with many a gem of price his promise
Your enjoyment to pursue.
For I care not very much for worldly honours,
And their toys are naught to me.
I would rather dwell with you in yonder cottage
Than in others' castles be.
I would rather lean my head upon your bosom,
Or support your head on mine,
Than be seated at a banquet in a palace,
While a king pour'd out the wine.

And it is not vulgar boasting, when I mention
The achievements to be done ;
And to you, though not to others, I may whisper
Of the prizes to be won ;
For there's that in love, like death, that gives us courage
And a privilege of speech,
And the plunging soul for once puts off its garments,
Like a bather on the beach.
Would you like to linger lowly all your lifetime,
And to listen from afar,

To the voices of the great world high above you,
As remote as some bright star?
Or instead would you prefer to move among them,
In the regiment of the great,
To behold the courts of monarchs, and to listen
To the pulses of the State,
To belong to the high species of the rulers,
In the place of being ruled,
And be taught the inner meaning of the watchwords
Under which your kind is schooled?
In the lottery of life, the highest prizes,
In the stead of blanks, to take?
And enjoy the fruits of all the toils your lover
Will encounter for your sake?
To go sailing unto other lands and cities
For the sweets of every clime,
To be ruler of your pleasure and your fortune,
And to know no evil time?
And think not that if we lived our lives together
My affection would be hard,
Would be burdensome, or your high-valued freedom
Would by too much love be marr'd.
It is only after such long separation
That my love so hungry grows;
Were you mine, you should put curbs to my devotion,
And do with me what you chose.
Then forgive me, if the outrush of my feeling
Have betray'd a love too strong;
And remember how I suffer in your absence,
And have waited for so long.

And believe me, if our lots were once united,
And I knew you to be mine,
From my clasp you would be loosen'd, like the goblet
From the drinker's, filled with wine.

I have offered to obtain you the world's treasures,
And I mean to do yet more ;
I will link your name unto the mighty music
That the sea beats on the shore ;
I will write it on the shining sky of sunset,
I will spread it on the breeze ;
It shall pass to other continents, and echo
On the shores of other seas.
I will celebrate you down to after-ages,
I will make your name a shrine
Wherein lovers through all time shall come to worship
And acclaim you as divine.
I will light upon your brow so bright a halo
As no other mortals wear.
I will breathe on you and you shall be immortal,
By your name the world shall swear.

And if nothing that my lips can urge will move you,
If you thrust me from your side,
Even then my love, I fear me, will not perish,
Or 'twould long ago have died.
Yet till now I have abstain'd from elsewhere seeking
A more yielding heart to gain
I have lived in hope of seeing you grow kinder,
And have gone beneath my pain.
And if now I should endeavour to provide me
With another love instead,

I must think of all the years that I have wasted
Since you first my footsteps led.
And I fear that even if I should obtain it,
And be happy in some wise,
I should afterwards be looking back for ever
On the once-attempted prize.
Or perchance (sometimes I think it very likely)
I should not remain at all,
But should quietly anticipate my lifetime
And depart this earthly ball,
Go to some unknown and less worn-out existence,
Where I might not happy be,
But where Death at least would blot out your remembrance
And would leave me so far free.
Are you listening? Do you know that for this moment,
All my life is in your hand?
You may make me the most happy or most wretched
Of all men on earth that stand.
And if yet you hesitate and know no answer,
I will even then be glad,
Should you tell me that you mean to try to love me,
Or to let my wish be had.
I could wait, I think, awhile with such an answer;
But, oh, if you can, reply,
And enable me to scorn even heaven, by saying
I may love you till I die!
In the presence of the sun and sky and water,
Of the flowers and the birds—
Put your hand, my own dear love, in mine and kiss me,
There will be no need of words.

In the seas and bays of love are many whirlpools,
Many currents swift and strong ;
But the deadliest and most inviting vortex,
That deceives the drowner long
Is where passion's current crosses with indifference
In a counter-surging flood ;
And the whirlpool that it forms is known as friendship,
But its waves are bright with blood.

TEMPORA MUTANTUR.

ONCE on a time (but it was long ago,
Before long suns had dried the freshness up
That once sprung joyous in the heart of man,
When people were not quite as they are now),
There lived a youth who loved, as boys will do,
A beauteous maid, and she return'd his love ;
And they were wed, and dwelt together long
In peace and lovingness and harmony.
But that was very, very long ago.

FORSAKEN.

AND he is gone for ever,
And this you tell to me,
And think my heart to quiet
Beneath your homily,
And think that you can stifle
The raging of the sea.

I love him, ah ! I love him,
And you can hardly tell
The ardent rush of feelings
That in my bosom swell,
The passionate remembrance
That in my heart doth dwell.

I am no rhetorician,
No orator am I ;
I cannot paint my passion,
Nor fill with tears mine eye.
I am a simple woman,
I can but love and die.

Perhaps, when I am lying
Beneath the winter snow,
Or in the early spring-time,
Where all the violets grow,
He, he, my tomb will visit,
And think upon my woe.

THE REFUSAL.

ALTHOUGH thou hast spurn'd
Me often before,
Yet I have return'd
To ask thee once more.
Again I declare my devotion, again thy affection implore.

The wealth of my love
I lay at thy feet,
My ardour, to prove,
All tasks would be sweet,
All labours whereof at the finish, a smile on thy lips I should meet.

Though thou art so cold,
Yet I am as fire ;
Then let me enfold,
With love to inspire,
And warm thee, and melt thee, and draw thee with fervour that never can tire.

Thou bentest of yore ;
Remember the night,—
The heavens all o'er,
Were fill'd with delight,
The stars in their splendour shone forth, and the moon and the planets were bright.

Persuasion o'ercame
Thy obstinate heart,
And warm'd in the flame
That I could impart,
The word was vouchsafed to my pleading, which taught me with rapture to start.

Like lines that converge
From different ways,—
An instant they merge
Their opposite rays,
Then onward proceed in their courses, nor meet for the rest of their days:

So met we that night,
My heart to elate,—
A glimpse of delight,
For mortals too great,—
Then far from each other were driven by Nemesis angry, and Fate.

I seek thee again,
To ask thee for mine;
Although 'tis in vain,
I cannot resign
The bliss of believing my passion may yet be rewarded by thine.

O let me prevail
On thee to relent,
Rehearsing the tale
Of former consent;
It is but to utter one word, and I know thou wilt never repent.

By force if I seized,
And bore thee away,
Thou soon wouldst be pleased
My will to obey,
And willingly soon wouldst deliver thee up to my amorous sway.

Then think that thou art
Enslaved in my pow'r,
And give me the heart
That melts in the hour
When vehemence rouses thy love, as the sunbeam awakens the flow'r.

Let fervency move
E'en thee to be warm;
The force of my love
A statue would charm
To wake from its petrified sleep, and embrace with its cold white arm.

Behold, on my knees
I bend to thy word ;
Reflect on my pleas,
Before it is heard ;
The breath of thy mouth speaking love, would give wings to my soul like a bird.

Then turn not away,
In anger or scorn,
Thou know'st not the way
A lover is borne
On floods of distraction, and how, by his passion, his being is torn.

If thou couldst but feel
One-tenth of my heat,
'Twould melt all the steel
Within thee, and sweet
'Twould be to behold thee begin with affection my ardour to meet.

If that cannot be,
And thou wilt not know
A passion for me,
Nor far from thee throw
The coldness that covers thy heart, like a hill with a helmet of snow—

Yet pity my state,
Consider distress
Which thou canst abate,
Remove wretchedness
Which, though thou'rt unable to feel, thou alone canst attempt to redress.

Thou lov'st none beside—
Thy heart is too weak—
And 'tis but thy pride
Prevents thee to speak,
And claim with a word the devotion which vainly elsewhere thou wilt seek.

By all that I say,—
By all I will do,—
Bestow what I pray,
Consent when I sue
To love thee, and take thee, and keep thee, and prove myself tender and true.

O let me be heard,
More pray'rs to amass!
O let not that word
Between thy lips, pass!
I hear it before it is spoken. Alas! and alas! and alas!

TO ONE WHOM I REMEMBER.

A FORTNIGHT in the current of my years
I knew thee, and I sought thee day by day,
Ere yet my heart had open'd to decay;
Before the curse of fate had fill'd mine ears.
I waited for thy face along the piers;
I spoke to thee in chance-put-forward way;
I follow'd thee across the winding bay,
And for two hours—I think of them with tears
(Unshed and therefore bitt'rer)—we did walk
Unto a little glen three miles away
Alone and solitary by the sea;
There did we lie upon the bank, and talk,
And thou unconscious of my love. That day
Stands forth a landmark in my memory.

CHRISTMAS, 1881.

FADING.

LET the fairy blossoms fade,
Never were they meant to last;
Why should parting be delay'd?
Hope is dead, and youth is past.
Let the fairy blossoms fade,
Not for lasting were they made.

Let them wither one by one,
Dropping off the wind-worn stem,
All their loveliness is gone,
Nothing sweet is left of them.

Stronger blows the eastern gale,
Fiercer beats the noonday beam;
Fate and circumstance assail
All that once so fair did seem.

Pluck away the dying leaf,
Cast its petals on the air;
Leave no smile to mock at grief,
Nor a wreath to deck despair.

Nevermore shall buds be seen
On that short-time-blessed bough;
Darker days succeed the green,
While the fates their furrows plough.
Let the fairy blossoms fade,
Not for lasting were they made.

TO A FRIEND OF YORE.

WANDER away in the azure Past,
Soul that had intercourse once with mine,
The curtain of fate is falling fast,
And the players must soon their rôle resign!

The light that lightens the mountain-tops
Gleams but once, and then spreads away;
The freshness that fills the dew when it drops
Dries up at the oncoming swift of day.

If sympathy could thy grief assuage,
Thy lot were happier then than mine;
For the ray that pass'd over my life's first page
Vanish'd for ever, and left no sign.

Vanish'd, and left me alone to stand,
Without a cover or refuge nigh,
Like a pilgrim lost in the midst of sand,
In a tropic clime with a cloudless sky.

Thus is the pathway of souls prepared,
Crossing each other in tangled lines;
My heart cannot by thine be shared;
For thine some other as vainly pines.

Mystery dark!—and if Providence
  Ever vouchsafed a glimpse to me,
A look that pass'd the degrees of sense,
  And discover'd the things that are to be,—

Then would I tell thee, a day draws on,
  Marching through æons of endless years,
When the cages of circumstance shall be gone,
  And all souls be mingled amid the spheres.

From thy love that haunts me then give release,
  Forgive me, and leave me alone with fate;
And a voice shall come to thee, breathing peace,
  And a whisper saying, "Be still, and wait!"

NOT.

SETTLE down, O swollen heart-strings, disappointed,
To your lot ;
She whose heart your throbs with love had fain anointed
Cometh not.
Lightly turn'd the swaying scale of her decision ;
But it fell
You-ward, like the swinging hammer, from its prison-
Tolling knell.
Pass'd your yearnings, fond heart-burnings, self-persuading,
From you then,
Like the lengthen'd lines of sunlight, slowly fading
O'er the fen.
When the tempest, culminating, vents tremendous
One great blast,
Overpowering, terrifying, most stupendous,
'Tis the last.
Earth, recovering from the tumult, is permitted
To rejoice ;
They, whose ears are by long service keen and fitted,
Hear her voice.
Rising, mingling with the slow-toned chime of vesper
Breathes the sound ;

Not a calling, loud appalling, but a whisper
From the ground.
Learn there are degrees in sadness, and the sorrow
That is sure
Can, from that excess of bitter, medicine, borrow
For its cure.
He, imprison'd for his lifetime, knowing thence he
Ne'er shall roam,
For him, in that dark enclosure, fetter'd fancy
Makes a home.
Vain hope-nursing, destiny-cursing, is to harrow
Wounds amiss.
Better pace the lowest valley than the narrow
Precipice.
Beat no more, O heart depress'd and discontented,
'Gainst your fate.
See your lot, in all the world's design, cemented,
Designate
Since the great God launch'd this planet from the dockyard
Of the sun,
And the seething, molten mass to settle rock-ward
First begun.
In your courses, all fate's forces, subtly braided,
Work and blend.
Plato ponder'd, preach'd Mohammed, Hengist invaded,
For this end.

WATCHING AT THE DOOR.

THE door is standing open,
The throng is coming through,
And my eager eyes are watching
But for you, love, for you.

The forms that crowd the doorway
All unsubstantial seem,
I note them but as phantoms
In a dream, love, a dream.

O let them flow beyond me,
And I reck not where they go,
If they leave behind the figure,
That I know, love, I know.

The merry and the mournful,
The busy and the proud,
They intercept my longing
Like a cloud, love, a cloud.

But sorrow and rejoicing,
Prosperity and pride,
Melt in passion, like a river
In the tide, love, the tide.

And now you come between them,
And now I fret no more,
Like a voyager arriving
On the shore, love, the shore.

FACE THAT I HAVE SEEN.

FACE that brought a throb of pain,
  Haunting anguish keen,
Just beheld and lost again,
  Face that I have seen!

Face that struck the root of pain—
  Joy that might have been!
Face I shall not see again,
  Face that I have seen!

A REFRAIN.

WORLD I came from, world I knew!
  World I knew!
World whose trace has left my view!
  Left my view!
World I seek for vainly here!
  Vainly here!
World of loving, golden sphere!
  Golden sphere!

I WOULD NOT LOVE.

I WOULD not love a tame bird
That flutter'd to my call ;
The prizes that are easy
Bear no esteem at all.
I would not love a wild bird,
That ever soared afar,
Lest it might chance to leave me,
And migrate to a star.
I would not love an angel
With soul above mine own ;
The lover's couch should never
Be like the monarch's throne.

TO ONE COMPLAINING.

IN the grief of being alone,
How can the lone heart pity
The heart that sends its moan
From the midst of a crowded city ?
Whose love has darken'd like death,
How should he heed complaining
From the soul that murmureth
That its love is long in gaining ?
Surprise, more strong than pity,
Swells the heart with yearning thin,
That would take by storm a city,
Were love to be found within.

A SONG OF FELLOWSHIP.

SOMEWHERE you are whom I could comfort,
If I were by your side;
Somewhere you wander discontented,
Downcast, dissatisfied.

And oft you ask your heart, if living
Be worth the price of woe,
And oft receive the sobbed-out answer,
The mournful whispered,—No!

Yet still you trace your lonely pathway,
Unconscious to what end;
Yet still you yearn and pine and languish,
Nor meet with any friend.

Some day, perhaps, we shall encounter,
And I shall be to you
All your long-suffering heart has wanted,
Protecting, tender, true.

AN EPISODE.

I.

Like one from a dream awaken'd
  Who beholds the heaven he dreamt,
Like one who has pined in prison,
  From fetters at last exempt;
So I at your first appearance
  Exulted in my soul,
And I thought my trial was ended,
  That I should attain my goal.
And if you, too, should have suffer'd
  Such sorrow as I have felt,
If ever you languish'd lonely,
  Or in tribulation knelt,
Look up and let your heart gladden,
  For to-day, to-day we shall meet
And I will love and be lavish,
  And you shall love and be sweet.

II.

THE sun is shining above us,
The sea is shining below,
And your eyes on me are shining
With a more entrancing glow.
The wavelets dance on the shingle,
The yachts they dance on the sea,
And the heart in me is dancing
With more tumultuous glee.
For like a well-handled racer
That has buffeted round a point,
Where the breeze blew strong against her
And strain'd each valiant joint,
That has caught the wind on her taffrel,
And is tearing down to the flag,
So am I, with your face before me,
And less inclined to lag.

III.

FOOL, and untaught by trouble,
What wild hopes rose in thee?
For the outlaw of creed and custom,
How could happiness be?
Dare not to attempt to gather
The flowers on high that bloom,
To linger alone in the shadow
Is thy destiny and thy doom.
Go back to thy olden warfare,
Hope not on this earth for peace:
It is thine to grapple and struggle
In a strife that is not to cease.
And if God, to prevent thee relaxing,
Shall strip thee of human friends,
Look on, O heart, to the haven
Where human craving ends.

MISANTHROPY.

I HAVE loved the voiceless spirits
That inhabit the blue air;
I have loved the souls invisible
That the rolling waves bear.

I have loved the nymphs lurking
In the shadow of deep woods,
The denizens of flower-cups,
And all fairy broods.

I have loved birds flying,
And insects by their hum;
Everything that liveth
Within my love hath come.

I have loved little children.
But the thing that brings me bane
Is loving men and women,
For they give hate again.

FINALE.

NOT you I love, not to you
  This passionate outpouring,—
For a sympathy more true
  My songs are heavenward soaring;
Your face is but the idol
  That I worship that Love through,
While I wait a happier bridal,
  Not to you, oh, not to you!

SONGS OF SYMPATHY.

INVOCATION.

WAS there a note of music
  Struck on the loudest string
Of the most enraptured seraph
  Before th' eternal King?

Was there a note of thunder
  Hurled from the unslaked throat
Of the deepest damn'd of the devils
  Beneath the fiery moat?

Was there a human accent
  Breathed on a mortal wind,
That went to the ear of a stranger
  And left a thrill behind?

Then in the endless working
  Of the forces that move in space,
Their echoes are still proceeding
  In an undeterminate race.

Wherefore I summon them hither,
  By the power which they possess ;
For though I may propound the question,
  It is they that must answer—Yes.

Listen, my fellow-Students,—
  Open your ears for the sound,
And somewhere a subtle suggestion
  Worthy your while shall be found.

INVITATION.

THERE were men in all the ages
  Who soar'd above their place,
Who were wiser than their brothers,
  And further than their race.
Like souls from another planet,
  Like comets in the sky,
They left heroic measures
  To dwarf our stature by.
And what is that which foremost
  Displays them to our view ?—
They left the ways of custom,
  And walk'd in pathways new :
And this has been the token
  In the history of the wise,—
They dared to follow their own minds,
  And other laws despise.

The wise are not always heroes :
  The wisest, perhaps, are those
Who glide through this scene of tumult,
  And never their kind oppose.
For whenever such men do venture
  To utter their thoughts aloud,
They are laugh'd at by the prudent,
  And hated by the proud.

And those who allow the passion
For helping their race along
To control their course of being,
Had need to be brave and strong;
For Humanity, like a man drowning,
Who clutches his saviour's hair,
Is fierce to its benefactors,
And those who its path prepare.

Wherefore it well behoveth
Whoever unhurt would be,
To pause ere he take his weapons
And join in the war to be.
Well is he off who forbeareth,
Who can in his house abide
While the battle is waged around him,
With wounds on every side.
But yet it is very likely
That even in the hearts of such,
There stirs at times a longing
And a discontented touch;
And they wish they were out of slumber,
But in the midmost fray,
And striking a blow for justice,
Before God and the bright noon-day.

And for those who obey the voices,
That summon them forth to fight.
Whoseeyes are devoted to watching,
And vigilance through the night,
Whose hearts are as lutes of music
Whereon Love lays his hand,
And plays that melody wondrous
Which none can in peace withstand,—
They, too, in their way are wiser ;
For what is life, after all ?
What is this clumsy body,
And this sun-circling ball ?
And were it not truly better
To die in a youth sublime,
Than to stagnate for sleepy ages,
The spectre and jest of Time ?

EXPLANATION.

THINK not, when I speak of warfare,
That I mean the cannon's roar,
Or the slaughter of fellow-creatures,
Or savage scenes of gore.
The war that we are waging
Is a more decisive one ;
It is not fought with powder,
It needs no aid of gun.
We wish to annex no province,
To dominate no mart ;
The empire we establish
Is in the mind and heart.
Our quarrel is with evil,
And not with evil men ;
We seek not to banish monarchs,
That their slaves may be tyrants then.
We mean the need for government—
Not laws—to overthrow,
To do away with armies
By alliance with the foe.
Our war is as old as being,
And it will never cease
Till stop the wheels of creation
In a universal peace.

For we are against injustice
  And anger and strife and fears ;
We are satisfied with winning
  An inch in a thousand years ;
And the winds that blow through heaven,
  And the tramp of the sentinel-tide,
And the foes that feed our fervour,
  Themselves are on our side.

INTERNATIONAL ANTHEM.

SONS of men, awake, arise!
With the morning in your eyes;
  Show your days what you can do,
  Labour, conquer, and subdue,—
  All the world belongs to you,
Sons of men, awake, arise!

Sons of men, go hand in hand,
Brethren born in every land,
  Out of every tribe and place
  Pouring on with equal pace,
  Kindred blood and kindred race,
Sons of men, go hand in hand!

Sons of men, what wait you for,
Marching to the mighty war?
  Puny bars your progress mock;
  Stay not till those bars unlock,—
  You can burst them with your shock,
Sons of men, what wait you for?

Sons of men, your hour has come,
Hearts that beat the signal-drum;
  Doubting and delay are past,
  Fall they slow, or fall they fast,
  Every foe must fall at last,
Sons of men, your hour has come!

Sons of men, supreme, sublime,
For you wait the spoils of time!
  All the works your kind has done,
  All the heights your fathers won,
  Bid you keep where they begun,
Sons of men, supreme, sublime!

HUNGARY AND CROATIA, 1883.

REMOVE, O Magyar, from thy guilty brow
  Liberty's desecrated diadem!
  Her stainless crowns were never wreath'd for them
Who, free themselves, would other nations bow;
Who to that slavery they left but now
  A struggling neighbour-race would dare condemn.
  Croat s, keep heart! Your ancient mountains hem
You round with freedom. The Alps will not allow
A single shining peak to be polluted
  With any tyrant's banner. Help is near,—
The mad Hungarian, from his place uprooted,
  May yet be stricken in his vain career;
His still warm dungeon shall unfold its door,
And men shall smile to see him chain'd once more.

AN IRISH MARTYR.

DID you think, O hapless martyr, that your dwelling
Was within a land where freedom rear'd her head?
Was your bosom with the love of country swelling?
Had your feet to paths of liberty been led?

Did you hope, O youthful dreamer, to be reckon'd
With the patriots in their glory-crownéd band?
Had your fearless soul to sacrifice been beckon'd
By the ancient guardian spirit of your land?

Did you utter as you walk'd your native meadow,
Did you drop some words of purely gleaming hope,
Which the lying traitor, lurking in the shadow,
Overheard and tried to twist into a rope?

You mistook, O noble peasant, if you thought it;
For the manacle of slavery is here,
And the civilized apostles who have wrought it,
They are sworn to bring such souls as yours to fear.

And although your daring wish be ever carried,
And the country that you died for be set free,
Yet another and another day has tarried
The uprising of the sun of liberty.

And meanwhile the poison'd whisper of the traitor
Has got power to bring the honest heart to shame,
And the land you loved is ruled by those who hate her,
And who trample on her people and her name.

But no more, O happy spirit, are you troubled
With the burden of the woes you thought to heal,
And your death within that prison has redoubled
All our courage and our hatred and our zeal.

CROSSMAGLEN, 1884.

THE CARNIVAL OF BLOOD.

BLOOD is the watchword to-day of the great federation of empires,
Blood the baptism of republics, and the mortar of monarchs' thrones ;
Blood is the stream along which their barque of power is sailing,
Blood !—and they have made everything bleed, except the stones.

Blood, and the brutal hatred that is water'd by its shedding ;
Blood fills up the moat which keeps the nations apart :
Blood, which Kings unite when they marry with one another ;
Blood, which they with subtle arms drain from the world's great heart.

Blood ! the tide that banishes trace of our leaders' footmarks,
Blood blots the dreadful warnings out of the prophet's page ;
Blood overpowers in black foul gush the myriad tendrils,—
Chokes the million brother-hopes, germinate in the age.

Blood ! and now the conquerant, governing, plundering classes,
War, have invoked as their guardian, chosen as their talisman-charm ;
Blood, and the culled-out millions of the great European races
Stand, with their hands still, marshall'd to work the immensest harm.

Blood ! and that its fountain may not pause in its flowing,
Ships on the billows rot away, and the steam-looms rust ;
Thorns in the fields untill'd supplant the natural harvests ;
Poverty, desperate, stalks abroad upon earth's rich crust.

Blood !—O that all the human blood that ever was wasted,
Form'd into one vast pool, above which the halo of glory
Coated like poisonous bitumen, and the beast-like directors of slaughter
Therein forehead-high sank,—Slave, Emperor, Liberal, Tory

THE CONQUERED.

I.

COME, and I will sing you a song of the conquered,
You shall listen to the mournful chant of the overcome;
For the very harp-strings have grown slack beneath the victors
And the noisy cymbals of their glorification are dumb,
And the eye of the compassionate gazer is offended,
With the perpetual glare of the upholstery of their pride,
And the brightness of their gilded scroll-work seems to be blended
With the ineffacable lustre in which battle-axes are dyed.

II.

Laurels and all manner of tokens of rejoicing
Have been scatter'd over the cruel achievements of the great,
But the multitude, in their sad career of humiliation,
Have lain down silently along the vast cemeteries of fate.
And harsh as are the chaotic processes of creation,
And the struggles through which human generations arrive,
Yet much severer are the birth-throes of civilisation,
And the stain thereof is upon them who survive.

III.

History is the record of crimes that were gigantic,
Her heroes are those who did most slaughter in their days,
And the more repulsively immense the hecatombs of humanity,
The more enthusiastically sounds the intonement of praise.
And the business of European senates at present
Is to provide innumerable new batches to be slain,
And to build, by the unresisted plunder of the peasant,
The high palaces wherein the descendants of conquerors reign.

IV.

Where are the immigrating hordes of the Celtics,
That swept over the western land in cycles remote?
Have they perish'd before the haughty countenances of their pursuers?
Do grass-grown barrows their forgotten burial-places denote?
Whither are gone the tributary tribes of the Chaldæans?—
Did they survive the uprooting onset of the Mede,
That over them the Macedonian might sing pæans,
Beneath Roman, Arab, Tartar, and Turk that they might bleed?

V.

Witness, ye never-thawed snows upon Himalaya,
That the shadow of your lottiest summit is not so vast
As the cloud which uncounted centuries of oppression
On the stricken toilers of your dark peninsula have cast ;
Till it seems that there can be no alternative to spoliation,
No rest anywhere down the long avenues of time :
But that the fates have offer'd this long-suffering nation
As a great prize for imperial competition in crime.

VI.

Vanish'd are the American children of the forest,
The inhabitants of a continent have disappeared from view.
Overthrown is the mysterious power of the Aztecs,
Stricken down, the singular civilization of Peru.
And the recesses of unexplored Mexico afforded
Dim glimpses of a yet more primeval lore ;
And the Peruvians in their old chronicles recorded
The extinction of a people supreme long before.

Man, in his unresting march to the future,
Has climb'd over whole mountain ranges of his slain,
And if ever he gain happiness, it will be purchased
By æons, reaching beyond memory, of pain.
Wherefore I chant the unhappy fate of those like Priam,
And all who for ever after suffer wrong :
Down to the hair-covered man-monkeys of Laos in Siam,
All future victims are together included in my song.

THE POETRY OF SHADOW.

CRITICS, you are mistaken,
Who ask for a manly song,
The manly do not need it,—
They are brave and strong.

The victors in the conflict,
Are with full joy suffused ;
It is better for us to minister
To the beaten and the bruised.

Better to lift one pilgrim
Who droops in the vale of tears,
Than to galvanise vast armies
With trumpets in their ears.

THE YEARNING AGE.

SHADES of men and races who have vanish'd,
Who have disappear'd into the vast,
All the mysteries of earth ye banish'd,
Over all her face your footsteps pass'd.

All the continents and all the oceans,
Ye in bygone ages have explored,
Ever swelling on with restless motions,
Sweeping forward like a mighty sword.

Nothing hidden have ye left behind you,
Nothing now remaineth to be won ;
Mid the Arctic ices still we find you,—
Even now beneath the Afric sun.

O'er the rough Atlantic ye have travell'd,
All the western hemisphere display'd,
All the secrets of the sea unravell'd,
All the islands on its breast array'd.

You your ancient arts and arms have carried
Over ev'ry land and ev'ry shore,
And the generations that have tarried
Find that they can penetrate no more.

There are eager bosoms, now, are burning
To discover paths and lands unknown;
But their hungry hearts in vain are yearning,—
Ye have made the farthest realms your own.

Shades of ancient and departed races,
Have ye borne the burden of the day
That your sons might cover o'er their faces,
Lie and sleep, and dream the years away?

Growing weary in the city's clamour,
Growing weary in the country's rest,
Growing weary of the glaze and glamour,
And the emptiness that holds the breast.

Shall they seek in vain to find a meaning
For the hopeless craving that they feel;
Which from virtue's love is slowly weaning
Hearts that wont before to be as steel?

Shall their manhood slowly pine and dwindle
While they wrangle over empty shells;
While the Hercules has seized the spindle,
And the water has forsook the wells?

While their fresh and glowing aspirations
Wither like a stream o'er sand that's roll'd ;
While the mart absorbs the panting nations,
And the only good in life is gold.

Will there never come a mighty leader,
Who shall sweep the cobweb-shades away ;
Who of famish'd souls shall be a feeder,
And shall point unto another way ;

Who shall lead afar the restless mortals,
Teach them truths they never knew before,
Open to their feet the unseen portals,
And conduct them to another shore?

MIZPAH.

HAVE you noticed, as you look'd beyond the shutters
Of the fix'd beliefs that shelter round your mind,
Any omen of a tempest that now mutters,
Any token of a rising of the wind?

Do you call to mind the history of such changes,
Do you recollect how Truth came by degrees;
Have you heard of good Gautama on the Ganges,
And the noble life and death of Socrates?

Have you faith? Do you acknowledge that there reigneth
One Supreme, who over all affairs presides,
Whose high wisdom never any error staineth,
And Who, better even than yourselves, decides?

And when those you gave your fragments to are weaning
Their fresh minds from old mistakes of the world's youth,
Dare you deem their noble quest hath evil meaning?
Does the Devil tempt them with the bait of Truth?

Surely God shall thank you not for the least trifle
Of your zeal that overfloweth meekness' brim;
But God will not hold you guiltless if you stifle
The least yearning of His children unto Him.

TO A CHRISTIAN.

If curses took their weight from human tongues,
I would not whisper of thy future lot;
But since each climber finds his own foot-rungs
On Being's ladder, this can hurt thee not.
And thou shalt pass unscathed by many fires
Which burns for different spirits, and shalt keep
Thy pathway free from dangerous desires,
And prosper in thy spiritual sleep.
Yet art thou not of those to whom are given
The blessings laid on tribulation's shelf:
Thy Lord, upon the downcast Magdalen,
Not the pure Pharisee, bestowed His heaven:
The real sin is cultivating self;
The only goodness, serving other men.

FREE THOUGHT.

WHY should a free-born man endure
To have his honest thought reviled,
And every speech be deem'd impure
Except the babbling of the child?
The world, methinks, before to-day
Has been wrong, and again it may.

The onward march of eager minds,
Why should it thus be clogg'd with mud?
Or who Truth's radiant jewel finds,
Condone the trespass with his blood?
Why hate them, world, who show to you
Your fathers' thoughts may not be true?

The world, so greedy after wealth,
Rewards the inventor for his tool;
But wisdom must be taught by stealth,
Lest knowledge should dismay the fool;
And they, who their own shadows fear,
Cry, "Bring no lighted lantern here!"

The envy of the small and base
Pursues his path, who strays beyond,
And slaves inured to their disgrace
Become of degradation fond:
To them who pleasant chains have found,
Liberty hath a hateful sound.

The truly ignorant are those
  Who cling to maxims not their own ;
More cowardice than faith it shows,
  To leave the springs of Truth alone :
A creed may be a stagnant pool,
Which no one drinks of save the fool.

The ancient days beneath the sun
  Have ever seen the same old story,—
The men who in new courses run
  Begin in shame to end in glory :
Where is the crucifying Jew,
Or the Pope's persecuting crew ?

Brave souls, I know you, who have striven
  In all the ages for the right ;
By no desire of haloes driven,
  You follow forward to the light,
Though eyes grow dim, and heart-strings sever,
Contented so to soar for ever.

The soulless parrot in his cage,
  The sleeping rooster in his pew,
Pursue their spectral pilgrimage :
  Go forth,—they have no need of you !
Perchance the lunar sky contains
A star where Truth, not terror, reigns.

THE ESSENCE OF RELIGION.

NOT the accumulation of stone buildings,
Nor the loftiness of cathedral fanes,
Can preserve a religion from dissolution,
Unless the satisfaction of soul remains.

And the religion in which the poor are not partakers
Is an insulting hypocrisy and a snare;
For worldly prosperity chokes out sympathy,
As water in a vessel drives out air.

And the priest who is subservient to the rich man
Is a traitor and a crucifier of his Lord;
And the prostituter of God's truth before monarchs
Is a creature even by earnest devils abhorr'd.

Of laws religion is independent;
The decencies of society it holds in contempt;
It puts its foot on the neck of ambition,
And from pride it is entirely exempt.

It is not a system of cosmogony,—
It does not pretend to account for things;
But it denounces the Pharisee in his righteousness,
And takes the weak sinner under its wings.

It avoids the high places of the princely,
And shines in the low hovels of the oppress'd ;
It has nothing in common with economy ;
It shuns the cold, self-satisfied breast.

Wisdom is altogether outside its province ;
Its mission is to console the heart,
To submit to the inevitable in Nature,
While striving against the man-inflicted smart.

It has prophecies of great torments for the unloving ;
It has a level of equality for the proud ;
It has messages like moist dew for the afflicted ;
And its prayers are not aloud.

LOVE'S MESSAGE.

He who would come with me,
Must uncondition'd be,
Held by no chain,
Bound by no ruling law,
Clutch'd in no passion's claw,
Bought by no gain.

He who would journey thus
Must not be virtuous,
Must not be proud;
Careless of deeds correct,
Heedless of self-respect—
One with the crowd.

Far from ambition's spring
Patiently following,
Meek to reproof;
Of every man the friend,
Ready to condescend
On Love's behoof.

Willing to lose his soul,
If he make others whole,
Ashamed of naught ;
By one great longing fired,
To be of all desired,
With all love fraught.

Pining and praying not,
Hoping no higher lot,
Blest, reconciled.
For that man Heaven waits,
Back roll its shining gates,
Home comes its child.

THE WOULD-BE SUICIDE.

To you who wander hesitating,
Beside of Death's dark brink,
Longing at times, and yet still waiting,
Though not afraid to sink,—

I have found out what holds you hither,
Who hence would fain be gone ;
I know why go you cannot, thither,
And by what backward drawn.

The love of those who, should you leave them,
Would in their turn repine,
Perforce prevents you to bereave them,
By magnetism fine.

A subtle bond, a keen attraction,
Retains you on this earth,
Bound by strange links of interaction
To all of mortal birth.

So long as your allotted station
Would desolate be, and bare,
Put off your useless emigration,—
You are not wanted there!

THE ALABASTER BOX.

REMIND him not of the troubles
That the wide world has to bear,
The toil and task that redoubles,
The load of visible care.

There are other labourers working,
To lighten material woes ;
But his is the sorrow lurking,
The grief that in silence goes.

The lone heart-stricken and pining,
The soul that for kinship cries,
To him are beckoning and signing,
For he understands their sighs.

And wherefore hath he felt sorrow,
And pass'd through the vale of tears,
But that he might know whence to borrow
The medicine that such grief cheers ;

That his words might exhale a vapour
To bedew the dry hearts of men,
That his life might shine like a taper
O'er a wild and desolate fen.

MARTYRS.

THANK them not for what they do,
Humanity, in love with you :
If to serve you and to bless
Is their untiring happiness,

In their hearts if love is strong,
If they burn, and if they long,
They will preserve that love the same,
Though scaffolds rise, and faggots flame.

REFORMERS.

HUMANITY grows, a statue
  Half-shapen and ill to view,
From which if thou a single
  Disfiguring fragment hew,
Thou art as much creator
  As the fashioner of things new.

LOVE'S ERROR.

LOVER, thou art deceived,
Not what thy heart believed
Begot thy woe;
Not the love unreturn'd
That ever closer burn'd,
Consuming slow.

Not loving one too well
Brought thy soul into hell —
Not thence the stain;
But that thy narrow breast
Loved not enough the rest,—
Hence grew the pain.

In one direction thrust
Ever, thy heart was crush'd —
Learn to embrace
More who thy love require.
Love puts out passion's fire —
Love all thy race.

Then wilt thou come to be
Happy and blest and free
Victor o'er fate;
High above gods and kings,
Merged in the sum of things
Filled, satiate.

PERVADING LOVE.

A PANTHEISTIC PSALM.

I.

POETS, in vain your slowly builded measures,
Vain your high-climbing aspiration,
Vain your slow-gathering, long-accumulating treasures,
Your deep-drawn, overpowering inspiration,
Swoons suffered of ecstatic pain,
Poets, in vain.

Singers of old, your song is fading, fading,
Like flowers that droop on gas-lit stages;
The generations, marching, fighting, arguing, trading,
Drowning the whisper of the echoing ages,
Beyond your voices' reach have roll'd,
Singers of old.

Poets, in vain your sighs to music moulded,
Songs like aërial fountains welling,
Forgotten all, in dusty unknown volumes folded,
In vain with your hearts' secrets throbbing, swelling,
Long art, embalming joy and pain,
Poets, in vain.

II.

Metaphysique, high searchings transcendental,—
Philosophy, what boots your lore?
Guessers at unsolved secrets elemental,
Dim gropers in mysterious by-paths, nought revealing,
Analyzers, your way so long through darkness feeling,
Knockers at fate's unopenable door,
What boots your lore?

Mind-measurers, God-announcers, prophets' visions,
Unto you all the Sphynx is dumb.
Worships, a thousand years hence grown derisions,
Illuminations, problems, theories, solutions,
Immutable alone in ever-changing evolutions,
To all your far-fetched, hard-wrought wisdom's sum
The Sphynx is dumb.

Science supreme, deciding, questioning, weighing,
What hast thou of the ideal Truth?
In stars discovering, elements essaying,—
The fibres of the universe exposed, dissected,—
The secret source, the motive power, undetected,—
What hast thou, more than in thy Chaldaic youth,
Of ideal Truth?

III.

Warriors, legislators,
Wherefore o'ercame ye, wherefore legislated,
Wherefore your life-exhausting labours,
Your campaigns, cities taken, governments created?
Together your brass tablets, iron sabres,
Perished, as from the first to perish they were fated,
Or soon, or long, but following their creators,
Warriors, legislators.

Architects ambitious
To leave some token on this planet, striving,
Builders, inventors, skilled designers,
On all affairs intent, pursuing, busily thriving,
Or delving downward, subterranean miners,
Or mountains piercing, oceans joining, continents riving,—
What out of all to you is now delicious,
Architects ambitious?

IV.

Nobles, jealous of the blood that mounted
Through your veins;
Merchants, that with clutching fingers counted
Golden gains;
Emigrants, that ever sadly wander'd
O'er the plains;
Prisoners, escape that ever ponder'd
In your chains;
From your treasures' gladness, or the sorrow
Of your pains,
When your lot of life has reached its morrow,
What remains?

V.

Patriots, death-dealing, fire-eyed!
Marseillaise-chorusers, despot-avengers, wherefore persist you
Ever to furnish the feast of your blood to them that resist you?
Is not your labour as vain as the mists that encounter the morning?
Have you not heard through the trump of the ages the terrible warning?
Know you not force is God, and selfishness ever prevailing?
See you not over the world the wrecks of its victories trailing,
Patriots death-dealing, fire-eyed?

VI.

Populate lands,
Great peoples, nations, races civilizing,
City-collecting, temple-building, cultivating,
Empire-erecting, sea-exploring, colonizing,—
Oh, wherefore growing, spreading, deviating,
In ever-restless bands?

Implanters all,
With loud but all impermanent self-assertion,
Continually struggling, storing, onward pressing,
Involved in elemental warfare, vain exertion,
The surface of the patient earth distressing,
Vexing this quiet ball.

Self-purifying race ;
Casting its weaker elements asunder,
Crushing aside its feebler organisms, competing,
Born out of throes that rival Nature's thunder—
Artillery-throes, destroying, its own sons deleting,
Weeding the narrow space.

Species eliminate !
Trampling behind all animals, all creatures,
All countries devastating, ever onward pouring,
Devouring ruthlessly all other natures,
Towering abroad o'er all this planet, star-ward soaring,
Intellect animate !

Regenerative mind !
Forgiving nought, no fault condoning,
Advancing in stern regiment, undeterr'd procession,
Its own requirements only owning,
Evolving out of mobs and slaves in sure succession
A superhuman kind !

VIII.

Humanity, in vain you bleed,
In vain from savage caves arriving, growing,
You rise like some tall reed,
Or spread and strengthen out like mighty river flowing
Seeing the ocean lie beyond, and nothing further knowing.

Species of every kind in vain
Upward along the lines of life diverging,
From lower form you slowly strain ;
Vain, too, the lower life, the fibre urging,
The sun-impregnate cell into existence first emerging.

Vain efforts, though unconscious all,
To change the hour-brief situation
Of parts of this terrestrial ball,
Bound still with all its mass in undisturb'd rotation,
While round the sun it paces out its fix'd perambulation.

IX.

Needless, too,
The shaping in the stithy of the sun, the shooting,
The heaving forthward into space, the spinning,
The company of the planets still circumvoluting,
The solar system from the dim beginning,
The other tenants of the blue,
The Pleiades, high in heaven burning,
The great Arcturan constellation turning
The mighty, shining down antarctic congregations,
The belted heavens, the great elliptic girdle splendid,
The Yellow Way, the cloud of luminous twinkles never ended,
The rolling, glistening, flashing, sky-born nations!

X.

What cometh out of all?
A vacuum, a mirage, a despair,
A wakening to loneliness, a dread,
A murmur, like a trumpet-call
That fades on the uncertain air,—
The memory of the dead.
What look you for beside?
What would you be the better, if you were taken
Beyond your world and age and æon, all forsaken,
And shown beyond the sum of ages,
Behind Fate's volume's latest pages,
The wreck of that remotest tide,
That than which there can be no worse,—
The fragments of the painted cages,
The grey ash of the Universe?

XI.

O force divine, for ever surging
In all the realms and spheres of space,
All forms, all beings ever onward urging
In an unweariable race,
Eternally together pushing, drawing, verging,
In irresistible embrace !

Planets and stars that not asunder
Can altogether circulate,
Inwoven, interspersed, above and under,
That most harmoniously gyrate,
Pacing your dim-stretch'd paths, to mortal eyes
a wonder
Of dazzling order intricate ;

Not with yourselves alone contented,
Bright habitants of the blue deep,
Your radiations, not to be prevented,
With all, communication keep ;
Yearning o'er space, your lustrous fingers filamental
Watch us, caress us, in our sleep.

XII.

Fecund, replenish'd earth
That, through the rock-recorded ages,
Travail'd intensely to give birth ;
Unsatisfied alike in all the intervening stages,
Unsatisfied to-day, continually striving,
Producing, putting forth, renewing,
Through stubborn rocks, soft fibres, driving,
The principle of life throughout in all pursuing.

Buried, stone-sepulchred breeds,
In epochs, busily generating,
Developing advancing needs ;
Functions supplying, greater, nobler faculties creating,
For your own children foremost labouring, preparing
A broader path before them spreading,
Down which all later species faring
Are generate of you, and in your footsteps treading !

XIII.

All tribes and tongues of men descended,
In different zones and lands,
Together all inextricably blended,
Mythologies, religions, teaching
Your once-united bands;
The history of past strife, its own delusion preaching,
Urging your joining hands!

Republics, kingdoms, separated
By hills and seas and streams,
By similar hopes and longings animated,
Upon the self-same track advancing,
Dreaming the self-same dreams;
On every noble crest the world-wide sunlight glancing
Its undisparted beams!

The wise and great of every nation,
In every age alike;
The sympathy exchanged, the quick translation,
The mutual guessing, understanding,
The kindred thoughts that strike;
The congresses, the chiefs together banding
To avert the gun and pike!

The common habits over-stealing,
  Despite of custom's ban,
The ineradicable fellow-feeling,
The mighty march of colonizing
  That mingles clan with clan ;
The love of peace, contempt of war, in all arising,
  The family of man !

XIV.

Cities and countries, populate, replete,
  Together joined with intimate intermixture,
Stair-building for successors' feet,
Laying the keelsons of the future's fleet,
  In all a growth, in nought a fixture.

In all pursuits, however diverse, bound
  In common motive, like the circle rolling,
Whose outward-pointing spokes are found
Turnwise assisting o'er the tire-swept ground,
  The central axle all controlling.

In moving many, in emotion one,
  All indisseverably linked together
Even before you e'er begun
Voyaging on this orb around the sun,
  Through stormy and through pleasant weather.

XV.

Heroes and fighters for losing traditions,
Spurr'd by a power that you wot not about,
Stung to the heart by the cruel conditions
Fencing the peoples and walling love out,—
How can you be stopp'd from propagating your missions?

Hungry for sympathy, over men yearning,
Happiness ever intent to impart,
Here or hereafter, no difference discerning,
Busy in healing Humanity's smart,—
Love within your bosoms so continually burning.

XVI.

Ye that, more than friends and children, strangely prize
Hoarded gold,
Even ye obey so far the power whose ties
All enfold.
Ye who lineage take from unforgotten kings,
Fear'd of old,
Even ye must be a part, for want of wings,
Of this mould.'
Ye that in the narrow chamber built of stone,
Helpless lie,
For the border of a country or a zone
No more cry;

For this planet is a prison to the soul
That doth sigh,
And ye may not be set free from all control
When ye die.

Ye that tread, with heavy, longing-laden feet,
Foreign lands,
All souls born on earth, with like dejection, greet
Mortal bands,
And the soul that from its townsmen in the night
Lifts its hands,
Feels as homesick for a circle in whose sight
Stars are sands.

XVII.

Invading conquerers,
Beneath your horses' hoofs the kingdoms bleeding,
Yet you with all the wheels of fate connected,
The present woe, for future weal affected ;
Obliged, behoved, you waged those wars,
Anon, like tides, receding.

Imprinters for a time,
To you your own advance alone apparent,
On selfish purposes intent, achieving,
Thereafter all mankind the fruit receiving,
Down the far stretch and span of time
Of future labours, parent.

XVIII.

Upward to Truth for ever toiling,
In patient journey, so to plod, contented,
Looking for no outside assistance, self-reliant,
Quarrying,—the strata-covered caverns of the earth despoiling,
Fashioning the stones by turns to be imposed, mortised, cemented
By accidents delayed, but not at last prevented,
Of every obstacle defiant :

Through years and generations changing,
Indomitably still the work proceeding,
Checked, but not stayed, by any death of workman single,
Fresh ones continually rising up, alongside ranging,
No bargain making, no reward of wages needing,
No dustiness, no weariness of labour, heeding,
Anxious alone in work to mingle :

The deep foundation, long transcended,
The massive walls compact, above arising,
The mason marks of all the peoples on them showing
The Babel turrets raised mistakenly and never ended,
The architectures blent, the symmetry surprising,
The needful scaffoldings, their falsehoods, advertising—
Truth's everlasting temple growing !

XIX.

Poets, I know you now!
Not for yourselves indeed your songs you chanted,
Not of your own volition those sweet words outpouring,
Never your own identities you vaunted,
But overborne and swept away
On wings of unknown tenure blindly soaring,
Emitted you each lay.

Poets, with hearts of pain
That drove you to and fro, always tormented,
That wrestled with you, goading to that mournful murmur
Which haunts your songs, like books with covers scented,
That contrapuntal melody
Which, while the music swells and gathers firmer,
Dogs all its harmony.

Poets that loved too much,
For you, the surfaces of things, the covers,
Were taken off, in you the veins and fibres quiver'd,
Your pulse, for love alone created, shiver'd
In any breeze that blew not thence,
You shunn'd the company of all but lovers
And loving influence.

Poets, the organ-pipes
Of that immortal ravishment undying
Which Love in all the universe elaborateth,
Your hearts alone with love he never sateth.
O loudest-tongued of all that is!
O yet, to love in all things, testifying,
Perpetual witnesses!

XX.

Pervading Love!
Love that with silent wing
Broodeth o'er everything,
Pervading Love!
Love that can conquer c are,
Can overcome despair,
Love that is everywhere,
Pervading Love!

Unshaken is the heart
Wherein Love hath his part—
Pervading Love!
Though pain, like shadow, flee
Though life a phantom be,
Love is reality—
Pervading Love!

Strong with the strength of fate,
Working to cast out hate,
Pervading Love!
Round that the orbits roll,
To that ascends the soul,
That is the far-off pole—
Pervading Love!

MISCELLANEOUS.

BY THE WAYSIDE.

I.

(Imitated from Martial.)

I LOVE thee, Ella; why, I cannot tell:
This only I can say, I love thee well.

II.

The rosebud to the jasmine said,
"Fair blossom, bend to me!"
The jasmine turn'd away her head,
But soon the rose his petals spread,
And who so sad as she?

III.

A minute may pass like a day,
And a day may pass like a year,
And a year may be bound in a moment,
And lock'd within a tear.

IV.

Better go forth into the storm,
Than crouch beneath the Upas warm;
Naked, the briers less shall hurt
Thy skin than a Nessean shirt.

V.

Love me not,
'Tis dangerous to woo;
Or be I god or fiend,
What is that to you?
If on my brow the light
Be of unearthly hue,
Love me not,
Beware of what you do!

VI.

By turns men laugh and weep awhile,
But skeletons for ever smile.

VII.

My lyre is strung to sorrow,
I sing the songs of grief;
How then in answer to you,
Should my heart find relief?

O blessed, blessed spirit
That met me on the way,
That brought me hope and healing,
Oh! go no more away!

Before I ever knew thee,
I bore to be alone;
Now live without I could not,
Such joy once having known.

VIII.

It is not when the triumph-shout
Rings loudest in our ears,
And we gaze majestic o'er the rout,
Amid the daunted spheres;

It is when the stone on our hearts is roll'd,
And our buoyant rapture ends,
That our souls their filaments unfold,
In search of the faithful friend.

I thank you not for your sympathy,
For thoughts that in both did move,
But because you heard and pitied me
Where you could not approve.

IX.

Not communion, not beneficence, but forgiveness
Is the lock and bolt of love.

X.

Wonder no more that my heart's wall'd town
Fell slowly when you were there,
For copper is often in haste put down,
But gold we count with care.

XI.

They say that poets are small things,
Jealous of any kinsman's touch,
Lest he should pale their light too much,
Or pluck a feather from their wings:
I do not find that we are such.

XII.

Meseems, when we last encounter'd
That I spoke a thoughtless word,
And I bite my tongue at this moment
When I think you might have heard.

Meseems when you sat before me,
That my eye flash'd hastily,
And I think I will put a veil on
When you next come to me.

XIII.

If you write what in your cooler moments you sometimes look
at, wondering, puzzled, half-afraid ;
If you fall back fainting, feeling virtue has gone out of you,
dismay'd ;
If you have at certain moments silent snatches running and
reverberating through your brain ;
If you often wish your feet were firmer set on mother-earth
and yet thereafter strain,
Gigantically tugging at the ropes and ties that hold you,
catch you, keep you down ;
Then you will only long for sympathy, and care no longer
for renown.

XIV.

A thought came drifting upon me there,
Like an angel's feather against my hair.

XV.

I have lost a song for ever,
It will come back to me never;
Before in words it could be bound,
It faded without sight or sound.

XVI.

Guerdon of thy sight thou givest,
  Stirring hopes that may not be ;
To be certain that thou livest,
  That is joy enough for me.

XVII.

He who would rather be alive than free,
  Hath lost his liberty.

XVIII.

The buds fade not before the flowers,
  The lambs outlive the mother-sheep,
No other race beholds, save ours,
  The parents for the children weep.

XIX.

Who are we to pass judgment upon Nature, who have not power even to look upon her face,
Shivering on this uncertain foothold of a planet, bewilder'd at the edge of space ?

XX.

(A PARODY.)

Through the gloom of savage ages, murder'd slave and
slaughter'd wife,
Slaked with blood the selfish longing for a second savage life.

XXI.

Our life is like a hammock
That swings o'er a vast profound,
And we see not where it is fasten'd,
Nor touch on to aught around.

XXII.

This is the art of living,
This is the foil of death,
Releasing and forgiving,
And love that comforteth.

XXIII.

Love me not for my face,—
That is not me;
Love me not for my place
Or high degree.

Love me not for my wealth,
Nor for my name ;
Love rather grows by stealth
Than in broad fame.

Love not my qualities,
Any or all :
Love me for that which is
Under them all.

Love me so as that it
Thy joy will be,
Aye, in the dark to sit,
Leaning on me.

XXIV.

Let me be anywhere where men may love each other,
Where it is not necessary to compete for bare life ;
For this civilization will soon all free affection smother,
And I cannot breathe in this atmosphere of strife.

XXV.

Law eternal, immutable, lasting for ever and ever ;
Revolt perennial, persistent, indomitable, slackening never ;
The incandescent Universe, molten of both together ;
And man on the surface borne, as the storm-wind carries a feather.

XXVI.

What matter how we call the Force Divine,
If God be your name for it and Love mine ?

ANGER AND LOVE.

(A Fable.)

When the world was form'd from Chaos
And all the elements there,
It floated in peaceful stillness
Down the primeval air.

But the gods were not contented
With the calm and the quiet that reign'd,
For they fear'd it would slowly harden
Until nothing of life remain'd.

So they call'd an Olympian council
Of all the immortal gods,
And they knew that it needed a spirit
To move in its motionless clods.

And they form'd a composition
Of water and fire and flame,
And transfused it throughout all nature
And all the terrestrial frame.

But not even the gods of Olympus
Seem always to act aright,
And this did the work of ages
In the space of a single night.

For it hiss'd and it flamed in fury,
  It kept in continual flare,
It shook the world's foundations
  And started it through the air.

So the gods again were gather'd
  To cure the disaster dire
That was wrought by the raging compound
  Of water and flame and fire.

Then they form'd a fresh composition
  Of honey and milk and oil,
And mix'd it among creation
  In many a clinging coil.

It closed the earth together,
  Uniting its clods of clay,
And wherever it met disturbance
  It caused it to vanish away.

Thus were the two things balanced,
  With the world kept in motion between,
As the gods had devised in their wisdom,
  Which never at once is seen.

For the earth was kept from stagnation
By the water and flame and fire,
And bound by the oil and honey
And milk, as a wheel by its tire.

And still in the breasts of mortals
The different things unite,
And ever and aye they battle
And alternately gain the fight.

For the compound that wrought confusion
That causes it still the same,
Is the anger that wars in men's bosoms
Like the water and fire and flame.

And the remedy, working as smoothly
As amber that rubs on silk,
Is the love that joins men together
Like the honey and oil and milk.

Then let men beware of the former,
And from passion and rage keep free,
For each moment spent in anger
Is a pearl thrown into the sea:

Let them cling to the warm affections
That the heart of the mortal craves,
For love is a pearl that the diver
Brings up from beneath the waves.

LOVE'S DEFENCE.

ONCE in a grave and ancient town,
For wisdom held in high renown,
A little wandering stranger-boy
Had done some citizen annoy;
Straight was he summon'd to the Court,
To suffer for his wanton sport.
A row of sober magistrates,
The youthful criminal awaits.
What is his crime? The crime's rehearsed
By artful tongue, in pleading versed,
Until it seem'd as if no reason
Could keep that urchin from the prison.
And now the culprit's turn has come,
But lo! his little lips are dumb.
In vain the crier's voice is heard;
The youngster answers not a word.
At length the learned judges drew
Their sentence up:—"To prison with you!
There shall you linger till the sun
His annual zodiac course has run."
Then all at once his voice he found,
And sweet and silvery was the sound.
"You cannot punish me," he said,
"Nor in a prison lay my head;
Dungeons and bars would useless prove,
For Love is free—and I am Love!"
The old men stared in huge dismay,
But Cupid laugh'd and ran away.

SUNSHINE.

BATHED in balmy odours
Sitting upon flow'rs,
By the rippling waters,
Thus we pass the hours.

In the trees above us
Gaily sing the birds,
Making pleasant music
To our whisper'd words.

Yonder in the open
Pours the sunshine down
On the stooping reapers,
And the harvest brown.

In the stream the fisher
Lightly drops his cast.
All around is happy;
Would that it might last!

THE DISCOVERY OF AMERICA.

A SONNET.

COLUMBUS, hadst thou, half across the sea,
Foreseen the future of four hundred years,
The peaceful scenes to be disturbed by thee,
The blood to be pour'd out on Spanish spears,
And Time's revenge in Spanish misery,—
Would'st thou have chos'n to perish with thy peers,
Before thine eyes the western land had found?
Or would'st thou, having search'd the fates again,
And seen a mighty state of birth renown'd,
A free republic, vaster far than Spain,
Arising, noble, on this unknown ground,
For storms to try, and foes assail in vain,—
Would'st thou have thrown the good and bad in weight,
And gone thy way, nor check'd the course of Fate?

IONA.

ROUGH are the rocks that stand
On the skirts of the north-west land,
  Where the winds and waters rule,
There, where the billows roar
Around the terrific shore
  On the ultimate coast of Thule.

Alone in the stormy deep
Those desolate islets keep,
  Unmark'd by the passing crew ;
Unvisited, save by the wight
Who fishes afar at night,
  Or the wandering wild seamew.

But harder than stones and rocks,
And rougher than storm-wind's knocks,
  Are the trials of life below.
And the wiles that allure the flesh,
And the cares that the soul immesh
  Are the work of a fiercer foe.

Amid man's unhallow'd brood,
The soul that would cleave to good
  Is more desolate by far
Than the loneliest ocean-isle
On which the sea-birds smile,
  Or glances the midnight star.

And what could heart desire
Of happier or of higher
  Than tenanted that grey sod?
For what is Heaven to be
But blessed company,
  And the palpable presence of God?

THE STAR PUT OUT.

WHERE broad Euphrates washes
  The Babylonian plain,
The old Chaldean sages
  Establish'd wisdom's reign.

They scann'd the midnight heavens,
  And in their courses read
The destiny of the living,
  The secrets of the dead.

And some who turn'd their study
  To gain mysterious lore,
Took certain vows upon them
  That were not known before.

For each disciple singled
From out the thousand lights
One to whose watch he bound him
By high and hallow'd rites.

Thus from this earth's disturbance
He sought a fate afar,
In mystical alliance
And marriage with a star.

For they said, though men may perish,
And the things of earth decay,
The stars are made immortal,
And do not pass away.

But one upon his turret
Was communing at night,
When lo! a dreadful comet
Invades the realms of light,

Travelling from ancient limits
On Chaos' border set,
Amid the order'd circles
Arose its fiery jet.

The watcher on the watch-tower
Beheld it drawing near,
The orb of his devotion,
His unapproachèd sphere.

For one long hour its presence
  Conceal'd the sacred light ;
At last it drew asunder
  And vanish'd through the night.

But that star kept no longer
  Its dwelling-place on high,
And nought was left but blackness
  To meet the gazer's eye.

And he whose soul had striven
  Beyond its native zone
For superhuman solace,
  Was desolate and alone.

And no more, for ever after,
  Though to men undimm'd his eye,
Could he see aught but darkness
  In the regions of the sky.

FIRDAUSI.

In Iran the Sultan Mahmud reigned,
His proud heart with lust of glory pained.

Craved he that his name should linger long
In the splendour of a poet's song.

Means were used, in all his court, to find
Unto whom the task might be assigned.

Came Firdausi from his native fields;
Soon to him the foremost rival yields.

Mahmud heard the wondrous verse with joy,—
Bade with rich rewards for its employ.

Persia's chronicles in couplets told,
Every one should be repaid with gold.

Long the poet at his labour wrought;
Sixty thousand couplets then he brought.

But, ere this, an evil-souled vizier
Poured his slanders in the monarch's ear.

To the poet, as a mark of shame,
Sixty thousand silver pieces came.

He, inflamed at that long labour's loss,
To his slaves distributed the dross.

Turned he then his poem's final page,—
To the Sultan thus addressed his rage.

"Cruel tyrant, since to thee is given
Transient empire, dread the wrath of Heaven!

Trample not the weakest things that crawl,
Not the ant, for life is lov'd by all.

Wast thou not afraid to injure one
From whose vengeful pen the blood-drops run?

Man ungrateful, pitiless as base,
All thy actions but betray thy race!

Thou art heir of neither king nor khan,
But a blacksmith out of Ispahan!

Plant in Paradise a bitter root,
Still it bears its own ungrateful fruit.

Thou shalt perish like more noble kings,
While this book ascends on glorious wings!

Black thy memory shall for aye remain,
While endures the glory of my strain!"

Thus he wrote his satire fierce and keen,
Still with Persia's annals always seen.

Then he fled that place of shame and scorn,
Wandering on through foreign lands forlorn.

Till at last in hoary age he found
Brief repose upon his native ground.

Mourned the Sultan when he saw that verse ;
Pierced at heart by an immortal curse.

On that false vizier at length he turned—
Banished him who had the poet spurned.

Next an embassy, Firdausi, sought,
Sixty thousand golden pieces brought.

But while they were yet upon the road,
He had found the undisturbed abode.

To his daughter they the tribute gave ;
She rejected it beside his grave.

Back to Mahmud those vain riches came,
And the Sultan died beneath his shame.

[For most of the foregoing I am indebted to Professor Mir Aulad Ali, of Dublin University.]

TASSO.

Is it well, O world, to be cruel;
  Is it well, O world, to be hard?
Is it well to scourge with fetters
  The soaring spirit of the bard?

It is well, O world, it shall profit
  Thy hoarded treasure of song,
To bury the bard in a dungeon,
  Or drive him to exile long.

The mighty music of Dante,
  His task in banishment done,
Gives greater glory to Florence
  Than she could have, by welcome, won.

The hovering thought of Tasso
  In the walls of a cell compressed,
Burst out in a gorgeous epic
  That had else lain hid in his breast.

And the singers of modern ages
  Not enough from the world endure,
They find their days too easy
  And their song becomes impure.

O world, let thy bosom harden,
  Let the arm of thy wrath be strong,
Let thy bard be caged and tormented,
  And he shall make thee a song

That shall shake the walls of his prison,
  Like the breath of the rushing wind,
That shall open the gates of heaven,
  And leave thy tears behind.

CHATTERTON.

No, Chatterton, I must not think of thee:
I must not bring that tribute to thy name
Which my soul swells with;—for if I took the pen
To bless thee, all the rigour of thy fate,
The darkness, and the blackness, and the doom,
Would overpower me, and my sensitive blood,
Being curdled, would pervert the pen from thee
To turn and curse the leavings of mankind.

POE.

THE hour of his birth was lit by a star untoward,
The chord of his life was struck in the minor key,
And the passions that thronged the throne of his breast were froward
As a cyclone on the sea.

He came among men like a comet that strays without mission
Through the margins of space, where no order nor certitude is,
And they exorcised from them the not-understood apparition,
And their ways were not as his.

Vainly, O, in vain did the preachers preach it,
How in the hands of a God his life reposed,
For the great Truth loomed away where he could not reach it,
And the Sphynx's lips were closed.

The strings of his lyre were caught from the golden curtain
That the sky lets down on the track of the setting sun,
When the wood-bird's song is sinking in notes uncertain,
And the day is wellnigh done.

His soul had revelled once at a wondrous banquet,
Losing a stake to the everlasting odds,
When the juice of the fruit forbidden was poured, and he drank it
In the courts of the careless gods.

But the Nemesis hard of the earth whose restraints he had
banished
Overwhelmed him midway with a doubly unbearable load,
And gladly, ere long, from this sojourn of sorrow he vanished
To a distant and different abode

So, in a field that is not fenced securely,
Often before the appointed scythe has passed,
Some blades of grass are trodden prematurely :
But all are mown at last.

THACKERAY.

YOUR truth is not the truth. Your microscope
Pries coarsely into petty holes and specks,
But Life and Beauty are outside its scope.
History stoops not the mortal eye to vex
With paltriness ; it is the noble deeds,
The great achievements of heroic men,
The splendours and the flower-producing seeds,
That make and mould the world. 'Tis falsehood, then
In you to fasten on the marks and flaws,
The accidents of time and space ; for these
Vanish, like clouds that pass across the sky :
Love, Honour, Truthfulness—such feelings cause
Responsive throbs in human hearts, and please
All of our nature that is pure and high.

SONNET

ON THE PUBLICATION OF CARLYLE'S REMINISCENCES.

My Carlyle, if thou hadst been of such mould
As might have been impress'd by dints like these,
From curs that wont to fawn about thy knees,
With thee alive they would have been more bold.
But we, whose youth thou wast a beacon to,
We, on whom dawns that light thou sought'st in vain
We, having passed thy shadow, know its pain,
And from our lips the dogs' rebuke is due.
Belov'd strong heart, wounded with noble scars,
One of those souls that came from other stars,
That could not on this earth be pacified,
That struggled fiercely in their god-like pride,
And broke their wings against the imprisoning bars,
And were deliver'd when we thought they died!

CONSISTENCY.

If I congeal as I grow old,
And bear not out the test of time,
And furl the banner of my prime,
And grow to love of justice cold ;

And stand aside from freedom's march,
And eulogise the things that be,
And lose touch with humanity,
And blink at Truth's iridian arch ;

And germs of future hope despise,
And shiver in the wind of change,
And to my present self grow strange—
Bury me from my grandsons' eyes !

A SONNET TO A CERTAIN POET.

IT may be so, you may be right,—I know not :
If it be so, I have no business here.
For me your lightning-litten auroras glow not ;
We thought them fogs in my anterior sphere.
It may be, all your friends are gods ; it may be,
The other side are devils and every one
Accurst ; and all the sentences you say be
True ; and all others deceived beneath the sun.
It may be that your planet is important,
That certain dry spots elevate in its bounds
Are as replete in glory as you say :
What matter, if ere a century you are sortant,
Sweet, silver-syllabled singer of soulless sounds,
Star-bound creator of unreal shapes of clay !

A MODERN POET.

I HEARD the poet sing of life supreme,
Of Man, the crowning work of Nature form'd
For action and existence, full, complete,
A glorious creature, gloriously employ'd.
Thereafter pass'd I to a silent room,
Where two old figures bow'd above the bed
Whereon their dead child lay, smiling at them.
O poet, where is now your shallow vaunt?
What is this Life, that like a bubble bursts,
And leaves such wrecks behind?

TWO CHARACTERS.

I.

THE sensitive, proud soul repulsed of them
It sought to serve, clothing itself in scorn,
And arm'd with strength to sound that giant-horn
Which brings to ground the turret's diadem.
The garrulous youth become the reticent man,
A transformation wrought by evil fates,
Stern-shouldering his high way between those gates
That frown'd upon him when he first began ;
The exile in the land of haughty boors,
Avenging his mean origin despised ;
Heart-sour'd and stung by all the weak endures,
Achieving what unnoticed youth devised,
Placing his foot upon the necks of them
He mock'd with service, smiling 'neath his garment's hem.

II.

The affectionate, despotic soul, seduced
Even from its own ideals by the voice
That taught it how to make its kind rejoice,
Heedless of what it bound or what it loosed.
The pedant youth become the popular man,
The sour bud warm'd by sunshine to a bloom
Which in the world's heart hath more gracious room
Than many natures of more perfect plan.
The credulous heart among dishonest wits
That wrought upon the confidence it gained,
The ruin of world-skilful hypocrites;
Nor always by deceits itself unstain'd,
Yet being best servant of its day and place
Beat swifter and stronger runners for the race.

AVATARS.

A PSALM on the strange procession of avatars,
The successive sojourns of demigods on this earth,
The mysterious beings who hailed from other stars
And suffered the punishment here of mortal birth.

Does this earth to you seem pleasant and fair to behold;
Does the existence shut within its narrow hem
Appear to you to have attractions manifold?—
Yet be certain it was far otherwise to them.

They were offshoots of a different vegetation,
They were exotics of an unterrestrial growth;
They were exiles from a far-removèd nation,
And to linger long in passing they were loth.

Yet their personal emanation remains behind,
After they have rebetaken themselves to their place,
And controls for centuries your evolving kind,
And avenges their sorrows on your hard-hearted race.

For the laws you respect, to them are odious chains,
And your rivalry gnaws their hearts like a viper's tooth,
And your morality tortures them with uncalled-for pains,
And your religion to them is a blasphemy of the Truth.

Did their lives to you seem directed by the aim
Of teaching, or making converts to their ways,
Of obtaining a wide, with-earth-enduring fame;
Did you think that they could be pleased with earthly praise?

Deem it not, for as the Roman poet banished
Not in all the barbarous tribes that round him dwelt
Found such sympathy as the least of comrades vanished,
In his own imperial city, would have felt,

So the wanderers whose inarticulate cries towards home
Echo on this bleak savage planet for evermore,
More than all the love of those among whom they roam,
Would prize the faintest token from that invisible shore.

For this, which to you is life, to them is a dream;
This, which to you is home, to them is a station;
They apprehend your affairs as a passing gleam,—
Their mind is really fixed on their destination.

DEATH.

A Dream of Consolation.

I.

It was in the hours of the quiet night,
When all at rest on my bed I lay,
That a dream of wonder, a dream of might,
Unroll'd itself to my inward sight,
And trembled through me, and pass'd away.

I saw a prince in an Eastern land—
An Eastern land that was fair to see,
Begirt by the mountain's snowy band,
With rivers rolling on scarlet sand
To the shore of an undisturbéd sea.

There were cities that guarded the fruitful plains,
Towers and palaces builded high;
And the gods were worshipp'd in solemn fanes,
That the soil might receive its yearly rains,
And no sign unprosperous brooded nigh.

Yet it came to pass that the monarch's mind
Was overcome by a shadow strange,
Which wither'd his soul like a monsoon wind;
And not a cure could his wise men find,
Nor could any effort the madness change.

For he went beneath an incessant fear
That the drops of his life were about to dry ;
Though his hand was strong and his eye was clear,
He ever thought that the day was near,
And he, alas ! was afraid to die.

In vain the sages most deeply versed
In lore of medicine, their lord assured
That a phantom-terror his fancy cursed ;
For the stricken prince his mania nursed,
And from day to day his despair endured.

In vain the priests with reverent care
Open'd their Veda's illumined page ;
No revelation discover'd there
Could beckon his frenzy from its lair,
Or the mystery dark of death assuage.

So another shadow upon him crept,
And he lost belief in his ancient gods ;
For it seem'd to him that they merely slept,
While their helpless worshippers toil'd and wept,
And fell under Fate's chastising rods.

II.

Next I saw how he arose, and from the palace took his way
To the great Brahmanic temple, there to meditate and pray.
Shutting out the priests and servants, as the sun withdrew its face,
Night by night he knelt and ponder'd, lonely, in the sacred place;
Seeking for an inspiration, seeking for a healing thought
That might drive away the torments which on his sick mind had wrought.
Then, as on his knees he waited, an impatience on him grew
That the gods and their conditions should be muffled from his view;
Seem'd to him that he was worthy to partake of powers on high
And to add considerations to the counsels of the sky.
For, he reason'd, how can gods, who suffer not as men below,
Man's infirmities and sorrows fully understand and know?
How can yon unmoving statue, glaring with its stony eyes,
Comprehend the burning anguish of the prayers that round it rise?
Surely, said he, if a man could mingle in the courts above,
Earth would be directed better, with less pain and more of love.
Though our sacred legends tell us that the gods begat our race,—
I from Brahm's strong bosom issued, and the Brahmans from his face,—

Yet if gods observed their children as a human father does,
Surely they might make this mortal journey easier for us.
Brahm, he cried, and mighty Vishnu, Siva, terrible and fear'd
By your pitiless indifference I am outraged, I am sear'd,
And I will no longer worship where I am no longer heard.
Then he snatch'd a torch that flaming showed him where the
image stood,
With defiant hand he put it to the consecrated wood,
Burn'd the great three-headed idol, in the outburst of his scorn,
And departed to his palace with the first approach of morn.

III.

After that my vision show'd
How he took his journey far
From the spots where men abode,
To where the silent voices are,
And climb'd the desert mountain road
To commune with the nightly star.

There he strove to realise
His affinity in space,
Sought with persevering eyes
To read Heaven's meaning on its face,
Or ask what veiléd mystery lies
Behind that web of golden lace.

Vainly, for no answer gave
Steadfast star or wandering wind ;
And the haunting problem clave
To the meshes of his mind ;
And the terrors of the grave
Ever closed in gloom behind.

Seem'd to him the systems roll'd
Heedless of a fashioner,
That the wind was on the wold
Without mark or measurer,
Fate was but a tale untold,
And chance the one great arbiter.

Wide the universal void
  Round in awful blackness spread,
Gaping, like a dragon cloy'd,
  O'er its helpless victim's head,
That hardly waits to be destroy'd
  But dies before, of very dread.

IV.

Then I heard him demand, of the men who awaited his will
If anywhere lived there one who was ready to die ;
And he bade them forsake all rest and pleasure until
They had found such an one and brought him nigh.

" For," he said, " if any such man there really be,
If such desire abide in a mortal breast,
The reason therefore shall he explain to me,
And so shall my troubled soul attain her rest."

And, behold, they brought before him, ere yet the wall
Of his palace had thrice blush'd red at the morning sun,
An ancient anchorite, strange of aspect, and tall,
Who had sought in woods the faces of men to shun.

And the mournful prince propounded his question strange,
And the hermit look'd on the ground and spoke no word,
Till the shadow an inch along the dial might range,
Then look'd he up, and a language dark was heard :

" O king," he said, " who yet art not a king
While that grim spectre keeps within thy heart,
I have it in my power to do this thing,
If thou wilt trust thee wholly to mine art.

"But if thou are not quiet, and would'st be,
And if I can thy sorrow so redress,
Bethink thee what reward is fit for me,
What price thou hast to purchase happiness.

"Would'st thou be rather happy than supreme?
Not breathe at all, than draw a painful breath?
The harvest of life's pleasures dost thou deem
Not too great price for the defeat of death?

"If thou wilt give me all that thou art now,
Thou shalt receive the freedom of death's pall;
But if to this decree thou wilt not bow,
Thou art not discontented after all."

But scarce the prince would wait till this was spoken,
Ere he came down from off his ivory throne,
And laid his crown at the stranger's feet in token
That all it sway'd was become the Rahat's own.

Whereafter the sage commanded the courtiers round him
To bear the prince to a dungeon dark below,
Wherein with many a painful link they bound him,
And stripp'd him, and left him alone to weep his woe.

V.

After, it seem'd long time went by within that narrow cell,
I heard from out its hidden depth this lamentation swell :
" Ah ! where is now the hope that once my life possess'd
outside,
That some deliverance might be found, some comfort not
denied ?
Once, even in my sorrows' depth, with darkest shadow full,
One beam of gladness found its way, escape seem'd possible ;
But now my latest hope has died within this dismal air,
And my physician drugg'd me with the poison of despair.
What gain'd I by my faith in him, my uttermost belief,
Except a double load of pain, a superadded grief ? "
But while he spoke his anger forth, the sage himself drew
near,
And, as it seem'd, repaid his scorn, though healing was the
sneer.
" Vain man," he said, " in misery dost thou pretend to dwell,
Why therefore dost thou linger there, within that narrow cell ?
Hast thou no method of escape ? art thou so tightly bound ?
It surely is impossible but some way out be found ?"
"And art thou here," the prince replied," thou cause of all my
woe ?
That I have power of egress none, full clearly dost thou know ;
For surely if there any chance avail'd me from my chains,
I should not here be languishing, tormented by such pains."

"And if I told thee," said the sage, "thou never shouldst go hence,
Wouldst thou reward me with thy praise, or with thy hate intense?"
"Anger me not," the prince replied, "with questions such as these,
Lest, growing pious in my wrath, I curse thee on my knees."
"But if I told thee," said the sage, "as I have come to tell,
That immortality abides within that narrow cell,
And that so long as thou wilt stay within its gloomy shade,
Thou art secure from all the fears that long thy mind dismay'd?
This much can I prevail to do, if thou down there wilt lie;
But if thou ever comest forth, full surely thou shalt die."
"What boots my life," the prince replied, "while in this narrow cell
I lie,—who would be anxious for an everlasting hell?
Go to! thou either foolish art, or cruel in thy mirth."
"Art thou a god," the sage made answer, "or a son of earth?
For when thou hadst the utmost joy that earth can give her child,
For want of immortality, thy heart was worn and wild;
And when I offer thee the boon within this narrow cell,
Thou need'st an immortality for all thy joys as well.
To please thee, I must also keep for ever dry thy shore,
Which, in a measured length of years, the sea will wander o'er;
To please thee, keep thy planet, too, revolving round the sun
That, in an era shown to me, will be itself undone.

No; but that immortality which I to thee can give
Belongs of right to every man on this world fugitive,
Or thou awake, or they asleep, within that narrow cell,
For all that either ever knows, eternally shall dwell.
But if thou art not so content, if death has grown more sweet
To thee than always to remain within that close retreat,
Bethink thee if thy other life with so much joy was full
That death to it even, in the end, would not be preferable?
Ask of thy solitary heart if e'er thou hadst an hour
So blest as that in which I now return thee freedom's power?
And when thou think'st on death again, remember how the key
That turned this lock was better once than immortality;
And ask of thy tormented heart which it could best deny,—
The power to live for ever, or the power at will to die?
Then as he loosed his prisoner, he raised this chant on high.

VI.

What is the watchword
  Liberateth
From your misery,—
  Life or Death?
What, the word
  That the thunder saith
Out of heaven, but—
  Come to death?
What, the whisper
  That rumoureth
After the rain, but—
  Such is Death?
Song no seraph
  In Heaven saith,
Sweeter than this,—
  We have known Death!
What is the harbour
  Comforteth
Souls of fugitives?—
  Quiet Death.

Blind the being
  That wandereth,
Stricken in life,
  That hides from Death!
Way that each of you
  Travelleth,
Troubled in life,
  But calm in Death.
This is the choice
  For mortal breath,—
Passionate life
  Or peaceful Death?
Which is the chain
  That fasteneth,—
Dutiful life,
  Or careless Death?
Which is the burden
  Harasseth,—
Languorous life
  Or dainty Death?
Where is the stay
  Most wearieth,—
Prison of life
  Or port of Death?
Road, where the bark
  Best anchoreth,—
Changing life
  Or changeless Death?

What is it over-
  Powereth
Scorching life,
  But the shadow of Death?
Life, like a pyramid,
  Chambereth
Undiscovered
  Retreats of Death.
Life, like a sick man,
  Clamoureth
Till it drink
  Of the drugs of Death.
Life, like a storm-cloud,
  Curtaineth
That great glory
  Display'd in Death.
Life is an heir
  Who lingereth
With his foot
  On the throne of Death.
Life is a music
  Murmureth
Till it deliver
  The chord of Death.
Life in a revel
  Wantoneth,
Weary at heart
  For rest of Death.

Souls that seek
What satisfieth,—
Shallow life
Or unsounded Death?
What is the light
Transfigureth,—
Meteor-life
Or star of Death?
What in the air
Hath sweetest breath,—
Bud of life
Or blossom of Death?
What to the ear
That hungereth,—
Songs of living
Or songs of Death?
What is the farthest
Goal of Time,—
Life distracting
Or Death sublime?
What is the crown
Of things that seem,—
Life ascending
Or Death supreme?
What would you rather,—
Fruit or wine,
Life delicious
Or Death divine?

VII.

Thus at last the maniac errors
That had mock'd him, met defeat;
Death was stripp'd of all its terrors,
But the cure was too complete.

Looming through that broken rafter
The Beyond, such glory full,
Open'd on him that thereafter
Life would be unbearable.

Like an exile in the night-time,
Who has heard the songs of home,
And discern'd in that delight, time
Drag till he can cross the foam;

Like a penitent that wander'd
From the ways his childhood trod,
Turning, when his strength is squander'd,
Back to his neglected God;

Like the hunted slave embarking;
Like the bird with cage withdrawn;—
No more searching, no more hearking,
Freed, absolved, ascended, gone.

VIII.

So intensely vivid my dream I felt,
  So intensely clear is it yet to me,
That I doubt if merely with dreams I dealt,
Whether then or now will be first to melt,
  Whether that or this is reality.

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